

Post-Bulletin

Quick Bites: Get your fill while exploring Stillwater

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For this culinary road trip, we're taking a short drive to Stillwater, Minn.

It's close to Minneapolis/St. Paul. When you descend into the St. Croix River Valley and round the corner into historic downtown, the air just feels different. Different in a not-a-suburb kind of way. Grand Victorian mansions and quaint shops are a reminder of Minnesota's earliest days, but the fine dining, art galleries, wineries and antique shops demonstrate how the small city has held Minnesotans' interest for decades. Sure, you'll have plenty to do, but first things first: Let's eat.

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Stop in for a gourmet breakfast and triple espresso at Savories. For more than 25 years, husband-and-wife owners Jeff and Kristin Kelmetsrud have been doing their thing, which is "home-crafted food with a little bit of a twist," according to Kristin. If you want to catch them for breakfast, you have to come Saturday or Sunday because it's only served on weekends -- but it's served until 1 p.m.

The menu changes every weekend, but they always offer a deep-dish quiche, which is "three inches deep, really fluffy and pretty rich," Kristin says. Recent "tasty and unusual flavor combinations" have included tomatoes, roasted onions and goat cheese, or roasted cauliflower and fontina. They also offer a Johnny cake, a granola/yogurt parfait with local, organic produce, and pancakes that take advantage of the freshest berries they can get their hands on. Savories is at 108 N. Main Street.

All that antiquing and gallery browsing is going to leave you hungry, and why not change it up a bit? Head to Leo's Grill and Malt Shop, where you can get what's rumored to be the best burgers and fries in town, along with old-fashioned malts that come with the leftovers in the metal mixing cup so you can pour your own refill. Not into burgers? Try the gigantic Reuben sandwich. Leo's is at 131 S. Main Street.

Don't forget to head down to the river for a boat cruise -- even one on a gondola built in Venice, if you like. Then for a unique dinner experience, get a table in the cozy dining room at Marx Fusion Bistro.

For seven years, owner/chef Mark Hanson has brought his worldly food experience -- a mix of French/Italian, Caribbean, New York and Asian -- into a true "fusion." "I've cooked globally, so all of those flavors come into play with nuances in all the dishes," he says. He suggests the Cuban-style flatbread for starters, which is served with chorizo, turnip greens, roasted garlic and tomato.

One of the most popular entrees is the sesame-crusting mahi, served with a spicy sauce made of jabanero, sesame, soy and ginger over soba noodles. Or, go for the grilled sliced sirloin with Guinness beer glaze, served with home-fried onion rings, crispy bacon and caramelized shallots. Marx Fusion Bistro is at 241 S. Main Street.

Of course, you can't beat the view at the Dock Cafe at 425 Nelson Street E. If you have room left, head there for dessert just to take in the view from the patio -- it really is second-to-none.

Bon appetit!

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