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Freep 5: Great new brunches in metro Detroit

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At MEX in Bloomfield Township, the brunch menu's huevos rancheros include two sunny-side eggs over corn tortillas with Mexican cheeses, chile sauce, pico de gallo, queso blanco, fresh guacamole and black beans. It's topped with strips of thin, crisp tortillas. / Sylvia Rector/Detroit Free Press



By **Sylvia Rector**

Detroit Free Press
Restaurant Critic

Going out for brunch is totally optional. Maybe that's why people enjoy it so much: It's a luxury, plain and simple. The food is always indulgent, cocktails are allowed and no one at the table has to do the dishes.

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We never tire of brunch, which is why we're always on the lookout for more great ones to try. Several new choices have opened in metro Detroit since fall, and one of them could be just the cure for your cabin fever.

Here are five of the newest places in metro Detroit to find beautiful

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Benedicts, the perfect waffle and perhaps a sunny flute of OJ and champagne.

MEX

If bacon and eggs don't inspire you, try MEX in Bloomfield

Township, where bold Mexican flavors turn brunch into a fiesta. Favorite choices include the beautifully composed huevos rancheros, the torta horgato "drowned" sandwich with tomato soup, and the design-your-own MEX iron skillet, which allows you to choose from almost 50 ingredients and sauces. At \$11, it's a deliciously good deal. There are cocktails, of course, but be sure to try MEX's rich, ultra-creamy Mexican hot chocolate — worth every calorie it must have. As a shareable starter (or entrée if you're a sweet-tooth), order the crispy golden waffle — lightly dusted with Mexican chocolate, topped with toasted pecans and dulce de leche caramel sauce, and garnished with sliced bananas. Entrées, \$10-\$14. MEX's brunch menu is more lunch-like than breakfast-y, but it fits well into the late schedule: 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday-Sunday. (6675 Telegraph north of Maple; 248-723-0800 and www.mexbloomfield.com)

Coco Fairfield's

For a friendly, small-town diner feel and a bill that won't break your budget, have brunch at little Coco Fairfield's in downtown Berkley. It's open for breakfast and lunch Tuesday through Sunday, but only on Sunday can you order the crab cakes Benedict, in which English muffins are replaced with homemade jumbo-lump crab cakes. Topped with poached eggs and Hollandaise and served with hash browns, it's just \$10. Other house favorites include cream-cheese-stuffed Franklin French toast topped with apple compote and whipped cream; and savory waffles, made from batter laced with spinach, peppers, onions and Parmesan and topped with two eggs and hollandaise. Besides breakfast dishes, you'll also find plenty of interesting sandwiches, salads and soups. The café — opened in late August by Nicole and Martin Miller of Huntington Woods — was named for Nicole Miller's first dog and the street she grew up on, her husband says. If you don't get the joke, ask

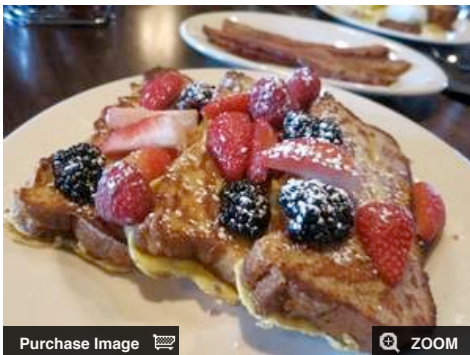
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Only on Sunday does Coco Fairfield's café in downtown Berkley offer its crab cakes Benedict, in which the typical English muffin halves are replaced with homemade jumbo-lump crab cakes. Each patty is topped with a poached egg and Hollandaise and garnished with a slice of avocado. / Sylvia Rector/Detroit Free Press



Slices of house-made brioche bread pudding are used to create the brioche French toast at brunch at C.A.Y.A. Smokehouse Grill in Wolverine Lake. Here it is topped with optional fresh berries and served with a side of thick-cut house-made bacon, shown in the background. / Sylvia Rector/Detroit Free Press



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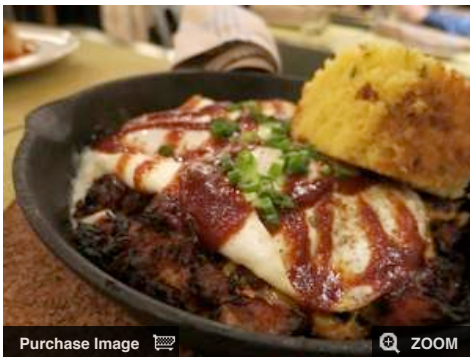


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The extensive brunch menu at Bistro Joe's in Birmingham ranges from healthful to sophisticated to over-the-top dishes like the Praise the Lard Skillet — constructed with pulled pork, cheddar, hominy grits, fried eggs, chipotle barbecue sauce, jalapeno cornbread and bacon. / Sylvia Rector/ Detroit Free Press



The lavish Sunday brunch at Marais in Grosse Pointe includes a tiered tower holding more than a half-dozen kinds of house-made French pastries, including an almond croissant (foreground), pain au chocolat (left) and cheese gougeres (rear). / Sylvia Rector/Detroit Free Press

about it when you go. You'll all laugh. Open 7 a.m.-3 p.m. Tuesday-Sunday; closed Monday. (2959 W. Twelve Mile; 248-399-2626 and www.cocofairfields.com)

C.A.Y.A. Smokehouse Grill

The prices are right, the scene is ultra-casual and chef-owner Jeff Rose's food is fresh and house-made at C.A.Y.A. Smokehouse Grill in Wolverine Lake. Here, you'll find hearty dishes like the Brisket Benny, made with house-smoked brisket, poached eggs and hollandaise on English muffins; three-egg omelets including a build-your-own option using three of the 15 fillings, and rich brioche French toast made with thick slices of brioche bread pudding. Egg dishes are served with a choice of red skin potatoes (which you shouldn't miss), grits or sliced tomatoes, as well as toast, biscuit or English muffin, and almost every dish on the menu is \$7-\$9. The big dining room has an urban-industrial look with accents of metal and weathered wood, simple furnishings and interesting graphic artworks. There's no need to get dressed up; C.A.Y.A. stands for "come as you are." 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday-Sunday; reservations for six or more. (1403 S. Commerce Road; 248-438-6741 and www.cayagrill.com)

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fresh oysters to Korean steak and eggs with kimchi; Red Velvet pancakes to shredded corned beef tacos; and pulled-pork Praise the Lard skillets to healthful bowls of fresh sliced fruit. There's also traditional fixtures like pastries, eggs-any-style, omelets and waffles. Occasionally a dish misses — my Korean steak was gristly — but you won't find a brunch anywhere with more interesting options and flavors. There are two dining areas — one overlooking the market floor and the other overlooking Woodward from a glass-enclosed space in front. Most entrées are \$10-\$15. 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Sunday; reservations recommended. (34244 Woodward; 248-594-0984 and www.bistrojoeskitchen.com)

Marais

Chef-owner David Gilbert's new high-end French restaurant in Grosse Pointe didn't disappoint when it debuted Sunday brunch earlier this month. The highlight here — besides excellent service, luxurious entrées and the classically understated dining room — is the three-tiered stand of house-made French pastries that arrives at every table as part of the prix-fixe meal. Pain au chocolat, pain de raisin, both regular and almond croissants, cheesy gougères and more are served with a trio of lovely spreads. Entrées, accompanied by two sides of your choosing, include lobster crepe Benedict; candied lemon Belgian waffle with huckleberry syrup and Chantilly cream; baked eggs en cocotte; and a 4-ounce filet mignon with crispy grit galette and fried egg. The fixed-price meal, including tea or coffee, is \$35 per person. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Sunday. (17051 Kercheval at St. Clair; 313-343-8800)

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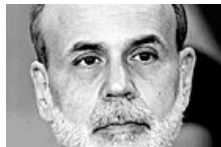
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