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DINING

## Sabrosa Offers Farm-to-Table Mexican

New Bay View restaurant features good, made-from-scratch food and an art gallery.

By Cari Taylor-Carlson - Aug 21st, 2017 06:04 pm

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Sabrosa Café and Gallery. Photo by Cari Taylor-Carlson.

In early July, Sabrosa Café and Gallery opened in Bay View, giving locals, and the rest of us, a happy place to gather for some seriously delicious eats. With the recent explosion of restaurants in the area, it's hard to believe Sabrosa is the only one to offer both breakfast and lunch. A 7:30 a.m. opening on weekdays (except Monday) makes it a perfect stop for a quick cup of coffee and a bite before heading off for the day.

Entertainment

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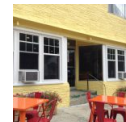
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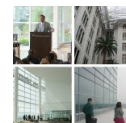
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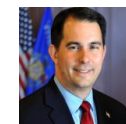


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It's located a good half-mile from restaurant row on Kinnickinnic in ever-developing Bay View in a brick building painted a cheerful yellow. On the sidewalk in front of Sabrosa, orange tables and cherry-red chairs say "Restaurant," because to date, it does not have an exterior sign. "Maybe we started a new movement, signless restaurants," joked co-owner and Executive Chef **Francisco (Frank) Sanchez**. "That's not quite true," he added. "We have black awnings coming soon with our name on them."



Ruben Piirainen. Photo by Cari Taylor-Carlson.

Sanchez, owner of the former Tacqueria Azteca, a popular place on Oklahoma, and his Sabrosa co-owner **Ruben Piirainen** designed the interior, a bright space which includes a baby grand piano, an art gallery, and a bar. Yet it feels spacious, not crowded. The baby grand is for Piirainen, a pianist for the Florentine Opera Company. On weekends, he's often at the piano playing classical music in the art gallery, combining art and music with fabulous food in this unique newcomer to Bay View. Piirainen has not scheduled a regular time for the music, at least not yet, but this could change according to Sanchez.

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The art in the gallery is for sale and will change monthly as new artists rotate in and out, another reason, in addition to the food, to stop by often. While friends and I ate lunch, an artist delivered a stunning, large colorful acrylic painting. It disappeared into the back room, but I plan to return to see more of this artist's work.

Before my group ordered, our server described the salsa, two kinds, both made in-house, one green and one fiery red. The chef roasts poblano peppers for the green, and for the red, he roasts arbol chiles. Every time he roasts those arbol chilis, he causes mass eye-watering in the kitchen. I knew why when I tasted a smidge with a spoon and the capsaicin struck front and center in my mouth. Heat this intense, for people who like it, will wake up the palate and all the taste receptors. Some say it deadens the flavors, but I disagree: rather, it accentuates the nuances of the food in the dish.

It took one bite of the campesino hash that came with Americano Scrambled Eggs to announce this is a farm-to-table restaurant. First the farm fresh eggs, stuffed with spinach, ham, and Wisconsin cheddar, transformed an ordinary scramble into something special. The hash, tri-colored potatoes mixed with market vegetables, zucchini, yellow squash, and for crunch, celery, hinted of cumin. Despite the many flavors and textures happening at the same time, each had a distinct voice as I worked through the dish. Of course, I added a generous smear of that fiery arbol salsa. Avocado crema drizzled on the eggs along with chopped cilantro and abundant fresh spinach scrambled in the eggs, created a dish I could devour daily. Tuscan bread served with house-made blueberry jam added even more pizzazz to this breakfast.

Sanchez has mastered the art of layering flavors, a skill he honed working in a tapas restaurant in Chicago. This layering was also evident in Avocado Smash-Up, toasted bread piled with smashed avocado, sprouts, sliced radish, and grilled cherry tomatoes, plus two poached eggs making a colorful balanced dish. It resembled bruschetta or crostini, except this was a full meal.

For the Roasted Harvest Platter, another obvious farm-to-table dish, the chef used the campesino hash for a base underneath a potpourri of zucchini, yellow squash, potato, spinach, and mustard croutons. A sunny-side up egg sat on top of the hash. The croutons took it beyond an ordinary veggie hash, another example of the chef layering both flavors and textures.

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**More New Faces**

The Chilaquiles disappointed me. I've had this classic breakfast many times in Mexico where they combine day old tortilla strips, scrambled eggs, crema, cheese and salsa. In this dish, the corn tortillas, albeit delicious because they tasted of corn as they should, were scrambled in the eggs making them less crisp, more soggy. I also wanted more crema and some cheese mixed in to expand the chilaquiles to more than just a one-note dish. But I found the accompanying Oaxacan black beans cooked to perfection, slightly chewy, neither tough nor mushy, but al dente, like a good pasta.

From the drink menu we shared the special, The Hibiscus, a blended drink made with gin, lemon juice, sugar syrup, brewed hibiscus flowers, and an egg white. My companion said, "Perfect." I said, "It needs more sweet."

At Sabrosa they make all the craft cocktails from scratch. We noted pickled carrots and basil on the bar, part of the mixings for Bloody Marys, according to the bartender. He said he also adds cubes of frozen salsa which gives the bloody Mary an increasing layer of heat as the cubes melt into the drink. Likewise, for the Morning Glory, which blends prosecco, vodka, and mango juice, he adds frozen mango juice cubes to intensify the flavors as they melt.

Sanchez and Piirainen covered one of the walls at Sabrosa with the word "Delicious" in 18 languages, including sabrosa, the Spanish word for delicious. That summed up my experiences at this art gallery, music venue, and restaurant with food I can only describe as "sabrosa."

## On the Menu





# Photo Gallery





## The Rundown

- Location: 3216 S. Howell Ave.
- Phone: 312-834-1929
- Hours: 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Tue-Fri, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sat-Sun.
- Website: <https://sabrosa.cafe/>
- UM Rating: 5 stars (average of Yelp, Trip Advisor and Zomato)

## Dining

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Authentic Italian,  
Generous  
Portions

La Casa de  
Alberto Is  
Simply Delicious

La Merenda Is a  
Taste Treat



Aug 15th, 2017 by Cari  
Taylor-Carlson



Aug 7th, 2017 by Cari  
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## Review

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Authentic Italian, La Casa de La Merenda Is a  
Generous Alberto Is Taste Treat  
Portions Simply Delicious



Aug 15th, 2017 by Cari  
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**Categories:** Arts & Entertainment, Dining, Food & Drink, Review

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## 2 THOUGHTS ON “DINING: SABROSA OFFERS FARM-TO-TABLE MEXICAN”

1. **Luke says:**

August 22, 2017 at 7:47 am

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The correct web site link is <https://sabrosa.cafe/>, not <http://sabrosa.cafe.com/>.

2. **Dave Reid says:**

August 22, 2017 at 8:01 am

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@Luke Thanks. Fixed.

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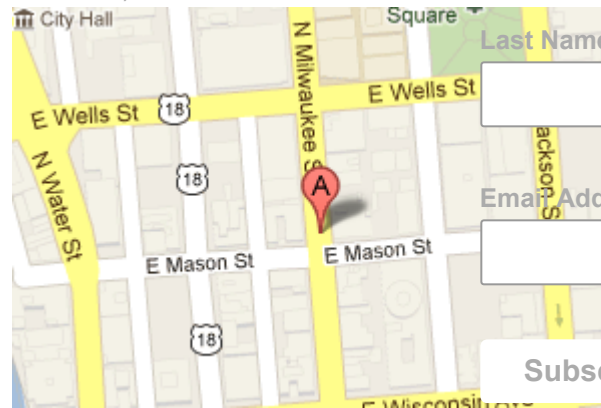
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