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Sabrosa Café & Gallery Masters the Art of Great Food

BY SHEILA JULSON APR. 03, 2018 1:51 P.M.

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Bay View's foodie scene just keeps getting better, thanks to off-the-beaten-path gems like Sabrosa Café & Gallery. Located on Howell Avenue just blocks from Humboldt

Park's southwest end, the sunshine-yellow exterior projects a friendly, artistic ambiance before you even walk in, giving a hint that not just good food but an actual dining experience awaits.

Chef Frankie Sanchez, whose family formerly owned Taqueria Azteca, brings creativity to Sabrosa's Mexican-inspired breakfast, brunch and lunch menu. Open since July 2017, the eatery has quickly become a hot spot. Weekends and mid-mornings/early afternoons can be crowded and there's a slight wait for a table, but there's plenty of art to enjoy in the gallery near the back of the restaurant during your short wait; the friendly staff accommodates parties quickly. On weekends, Florentine Opera pianist Ruben Piirainen, Sanchez's partner who co-owns Sabrosa, might also be present to treat patrons to a number on the handsome baby grand piano in the gallery.

Sabrosa Café & Gallery

3216 S. Howell Ave.

312-834-1929

\$-\$\$

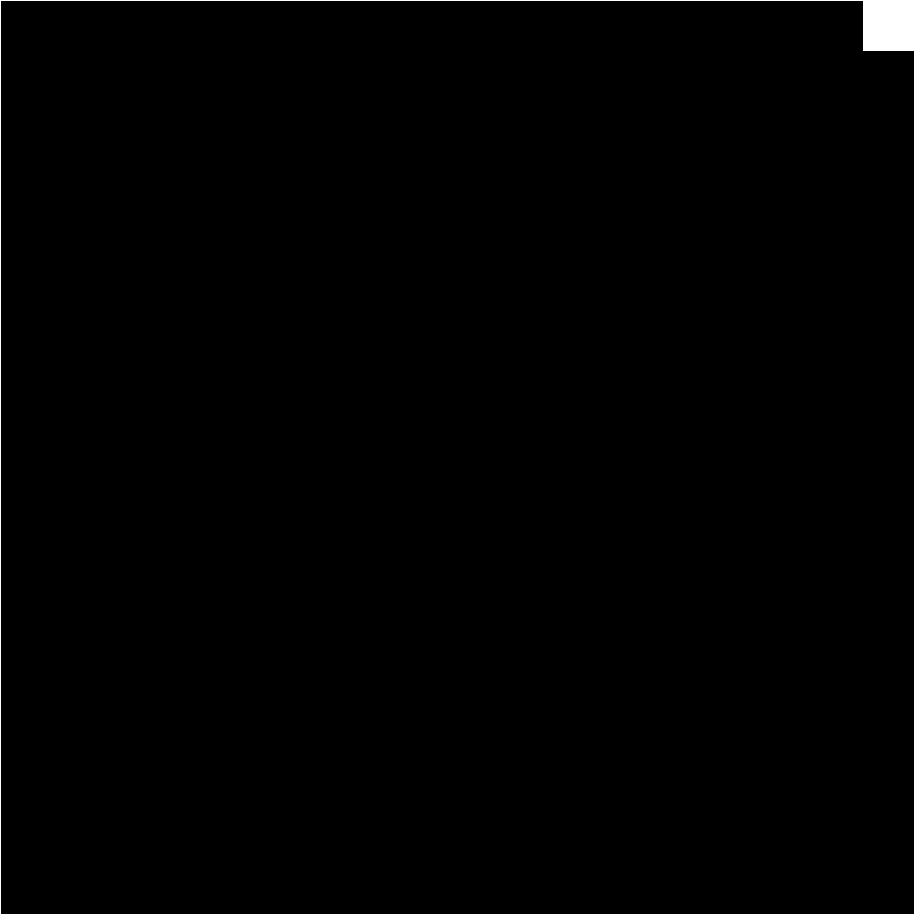
sabrosa.cafe

Handicapped access: No

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Hours: Tu-Su
7:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

"Sabrosa" is Spanish for "delicious," and the word is repeated in multiple languages on clipboards arranged on the south wall. A decoupage of vintage greeting cards and retro designs graces some of the tables, so there are plenty of visuals to admire while pursuing the menu. You can start with Colectivo coffee or choose from four varieties of Letterbox tea, or enjoy soda, juice or beer.



But depending on the time of day and whether you believe in the “it’s five o’clock somewhere” adage, try a selection (or two) from the craft cocktails menu (\$10-\$12). The Traverse City Cherry Old Fashioned includes cherry bourbon, simple syrup, bitters and Bulleit bourbon-soaked dark cherries. The Spanish Sangria Press, with brandy, triple sec, gin, red wine, muddled fruit and a house-made sweet and sour, could pair well with breakfast items like the spinach Florentine Omelette (\$14) as easily as it did with my Enchiladas Entomatadas (\$10) off the lunch favorites menu. The grilled corn tortillas were stuffed with a flavorful spinach Sabrosa cheese blend and topped with a warming roasted tomato marinara, served with a side of black beans and Sabrosa’s seasoned rice.

A friend in our group enjoyed the Avocado Smash-Up (\$13). Echoing the avocado toast trend, the Smash-Up consisted of Tuscan bread topped with mashed avocado,

arugula, radishes, cherry tomatoes and poached eggs. Pancakes, scramblers and choices such as Challa French Toast or baked French Toast Pudding complete the breakfast menu.

Another hit in our group was The Ruben, a vegetarian take on the classic Rueben; our server explained that Piirainen, a vegetarian, helped create it. The toasted marble rye was loaded with roasted asparagus, Brussels sprouts and an earthy blend of organic tri-color potatoes, smothered with just enough melted mozzarella, spicy mayo and avocado cream. The Cup & 1/2 (\$8-\$10) menu includes the soup of the day (served in a mug with a green stripe that charmingly resembled my grandmother's favorite coffee mug) and half of one of the four specialty sandwiches.

We were all pleased with Sabrosa's fresh, quality ingredients and the enticing blends of flavors used in the entrées. Sabrosa also offers catering and a licensed commercial kitchen for rent. The space is available for evening parties and events.

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Sheila Julson is a freelance writer who enjoys capturing the stories behind Milwaukee's happening food, beverage and urban farming scenes. She also pens articles about holistic health, green living, sustainability and human-interest features.

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