

Walk into Noisette Pastry Kitchen and you know you're somewhere special. Sun pours through the glass walls and, even in winter, the open kitchen with its bustle and chatter makes the place feel alive and exempt from cold-weather hibernation. Noisette's menu is visual, with names of dishes written on the parchment paper lining cases of sweet and savory pastries, sandwiches and salads.

Tobi Sovak and Michael Landsberg opened Noisette in 2012, at Broadway and Charnelton, right on the edge of the downtown revitalization. "It's good for us," Sovak says. "Down at the crossroads, it's a little frenetic and hectic. We're happy to be a little bit on the fringe of downtown. But I am hoping that the revitalization is going to spread. This block between us and the Bermuda Triangle is really no man's land right now."

With culinary pedigrees including Marché and King Estate, Sovak and Landsberg, partners in marriage as well as business, decided to do something different with Noisette: keep the price point low and have prepared food on a frequently changing menu. Sovak says she wanted to create something that reminded her of a European train station, minus the train.

"There is no way we can do what we're really trained to do — that sounds terrible, doesn't it?" she asks, laughing. "Our training is fine dining, and there isn't really a place for it in Eugene. There isn't enough business to support it. You can get to a certain level of 'fancy' and you can't surpass it."

Noisette does have delicious specials, but popularity got in the way of an ever-changing menu. Goat cheese biscuits, the lamb sandwich and a mozzarella and tomato sandwich are on the menu every day. Sovak says that when they tried mixing things up, customers complained that they missed their favorite items. "We wanted to rotate it, but they're very popular, so we decided just to keep them around forever — until they're unpopular," she says.

Keeping the price point low hasn't limited what Sovak and Landsberg can do. Sovak says that wine dinners, when private parties rent the space and even have music, let them make desserts like frozen nougat and dishes like fresh prawn poached in butter and vanilla, tossed in fennel pollen and served on a salad with greens and roasted vegetables. Sovak bakes the bread and pastries, while Landsberg is in charge of the savory side.

Special orders for pies and pastries kept Noisette hopping through the holidays, though Sovak says the December snow storm was rough for all the downtown businesses. She's already gearing up for Valentine's Day special orders and planning heart-shaped menu items and possibly candy. "I feel like I'm just catching my breath after the holidays," she says. "It's a little bit quieter, but not that much."

After Valentine's Day, Noisette will host one of the stops for the Feb. 22 Brides on Broadway, an event that pairs all sorts of wedding vendors. "It doesn't have to be just for brides and weddings," Sovak adds. "It can be for anybody planning a party."

The future's looking bright for Noisette, too. Sovak says that even with a busy February on the horizon, she's dreaming of citrus and spring.

Noisette Pastry Kitchen is located at 200 W. Broadway, 654-5257, noisettepk.com. Hours are 8 am to 7 pm Monday through Saturday.



TOP: LAMB SANDWICH

PHOTOS BY TODD COOPER

BOTTOM: BAKERS BAKING BAKED GOODS



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