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FOOD

BY TODD SOUTH



Daughters Cafe's *Khachapuri* features deep-fried Brussels sprouts, roasted potato, sausage, a fruit/veg/avocado combo and apricot-nutmeg rice pudding.
PHOTO/TODD SOUTH

In the family

Daughters Cafe is uniquely charming among local brunch options. Built in 1912, its mix of antiques, family photos and quaint decor give the sense you're breaking fast in an Edwardian family home—which it actually still is, with family quarters upstairs and the ground floor open to hungry guests. Mom is in the kitchen, with one or more of her daughters ensuring the guests are well taken care of. A brick patio features al fresco enjoyment during warmer months, and a large orange cat roams freely through its domain.

My crew arrived right at open and had our pick of tables, though the place filled up quickly. The menu changes frequently. We perused it while waiting for the initial batch of locally roasted coffee to brew. Cotton dish towels serve as napkins, enhancing the homey aspect.

The menu proclaimed, "All of our food is made to order by an archaeologist, so it takes as long to cook as if you made it at home ... for an enormous family." Apparently, Mom spent many years traveling the world in her former academic profession and employs those cultural experiences as inspiration for her selections.

The menu features traditional breakfast cocktails, Italian sodas, three distinct variations on hot chocolate and various espresso/coffee concoctions. Though tempted by a spicy bloody Mary, mimosa and Pimm's cup, we stayed sober with huge mugs of coffee (\$2), tremendous tumblers of fresh orange juice (\$4) and a foamy serving of rich chocolate bliss (\$4) for the youngest among us. All were completely satisfying.

On our Sunday visit, three brunch options were offered at \$18 a plate. The lad went with beignets, four pillowy dreams of fried dough doused in almost too much confectioner's sugar. I've sampled local attempts at these New Orleans doughnuts both good and bad, and these were most certainly good. A Dutch baby was the other sweet option, an American

creation from the early 20th century. Unrelated to the Netherlands, though perhaps named for similarity to a German baked pancake, "Dutch" substituted for "Deutch." It's a somewhat sweet version of Yorkshire pudding, with crispy, rolled-up puffy edges and extra egg leading to a custardy interior. Topped with melted butter, powdered sugar and a sweet and tart citrus essence, it is to flapjacks what a space shuttle is to a bottle rocket.

Both plates included two exceptionally large sausage links, fruit and a square of banana bread (really cake). The cake was moist and enjoyable, and, unlike most breakfast sausages, I really enjoyed the snappy skin and seasoning of these fat, juicy morsels. Crisp chunks of apple and pear were in concert with pink grapefruit, orange and—oddly enough—some cucumber, celery, radish and half an avocado. A well rounded breakfast indeed.

The savory option was *khachapuri*, deep-fried Brussels sprouts, roasted potato, sausage, the fruit/veg/avocado combo and a little cup of smoothly delicious apricot-nutmeg rice pudding. The sprouts were crispy yet not overcooked, the tubers adequate though frankly unnecessary. *Khachapuri* hails from Eurasian Georgia, a cheese-imbued baked dough with several regional variations and popularity beyond. This one appeared to be based on the Black Sea, Adjarian coastal variety that is shaped like a boat, with butter and a whole egg in the center. The flavorful, crusty dough was well-supported by rich cheese and egg yolk.

The ambiance, food and service were a perfect trinity, leaving my friends and I feeling well sated for the day ahead—a perfect Sunday morning. □

Daughters Cafe

97 Bell St., 324-3447

Daughters Cafe is open Tuesday through Sunday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Learn more at daughterscafe.com.