

La Crepe de France is moving *just à coté* (down the hall)

By JOHN LIVINGSTON

La Crepe de France is getting ready to evolve from a popular food stand in the Economy Market arcade into a full-fledged restaurant. Next month the business is moving from its current high stall between First Avenue and Pike Place Fish Company into a restaurant just next to the Economy Market atrium by Tenzing Momo, according to Rony Brown, the owner's son.

"In October, we're moving 'down the hall,' to a café-style restaurant. It is going to have soups, salads and sandwiches," Brown said. "It's an opportunity to expand the business, first and foremost."

After the move, Crepe de France will offer inside seating, instead of all too few high stools. From a food production standpoint, it will allow much more storage and preparation room with a double refrigerator and freezer.

"It will provide a nice, relaxing atmosphere, although I will miss some aspects of the stall. It has its own charm. It sits in the middle of the hustle and bustle of the Market," Brown said, "But in a café setting, we will be able to do different things. We are going to serve breakfast from 8 to 11 a.m. Fridays through Sundays."

Currently, Crepe de France offers 14 different varieties of crepes, which are round, flat egg delicacies cooked on a griddle. The stand's specialties are strawberry and vanilla with whipped cream – and a tomato crepe with scallions, mozzarella cheese, basin sauce and a sprinkling of herbs.

"Only half of our crepes are sweet," Brown said, adding there are several secrets involved in making gourmet crepes.

"First come our batter recipes, especially the vanilla crème and basil sauce combination. Then there is the grill temperature – from medium to medium high."

When Brown's mother, Nancy Price, and his dad, the late Dennis Brown, bought the business in 1991, the former owners stayed and trained them in the art of making crepes the French way – the right temperature, the right ingredients, and the right size."

The Brown family fell in love with the Market and its environment.

There is a diversity of customers and a lot of tourists this time of year," Rony Brown said. "For example, we have a little boy who brings different toy animals to the stand to scare us with. His dad is an ophthalmologist, and when it is time to come here and get a crepe, the boy asks him, 'What am I going to scare Rony with?'"

Brown has been helping out his parents, working in the summers and on school breaks.

"I was 18 when they bought the business, but at that time, I didn't focus on it. I tried other careers but they didn't feed the soul," Brown, who was trained as a massage therapist, said. "Working here does."

He works five to seven days a week at the stand – putting in more time now that the business is moving into an inside café setting. Rony is spending more time on the day-to-day stand operation.

"My mom doesn't work out here quite as often. She is very involved in the marketing and business end, as well as the move," Brown said.

He said many customers are surprised – pleasantly – when they dine on an authentic crepe.

"They don't expect them to be so large. Americans are used to the size they get in a pancake house, and when they see real crepes, they say, 'Wow!'" Brown said.

People also don't realize the amount of fresh fruits and vegetables that are needed for an outstanding crepe, and being located right in the Pike Place Market is a definite advantage.

"We get all of our fruits and vegetables here in the Market. We just go across the street at the Corner Market and pick what is in season," he said. "Moving inside to the restaurant will give us more room to do specialty items with whatever is in session. We also may offer ice cream and espresso." (Currently, Crepe de France is located next to the Daily Dozen donut and espresso stand.)

Right now Crepe de France is open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. every day, seven days a week, except on Thanksgiving Day and Christmas. The phone number is (206) 624-2196.



Three stools just couldn't handle the demand of customers at Crepes de France. photo/Bradley Enghaus

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