

L'Archipel



DISHPAN HANDS

SHEILA QUINN

Going out to a restaurant to dine is a trickier business for a growing number of folks managing dietary issues. From allergies to intolerances to preferences, finding a spot that works for our group of friends involves a friend who grew up on a dairy farm who was diagnosed with lactose intolerance and a gluten allergy in her mid-teens, another who has a gluten allergy, one who aims for a Vegan diet and another who is having such a challenging time with food she misses being able to just go out to eat once in a while.

These friends are so understanding. They never complain. They typically eat a small amount, or eat at home prior or post outing. They often host, creating beautiful dishes that everyone gushes about, mumbling rapture between mouthfuls.

Recently we had a brunch to plan, knowing that several of the gang who work around food issues would be in attendance. Instead of having them work around it, we worked with it. Enter L'Archipel.

On the list of recently opened Townships eateries, Café Restaurant L'Archipel is located in a repurposed residence on Principale, neatly set on the shores of Lac Davignon in Cowansville.

With three young entrepreneurs at the helm, L'Archipel represents an ever-increasing rumble through a new generation of business people who source local, focus on seasonal produce, reinvent their menu, and create their own seasonal products, like apple jelly and granola. They learn to build, restore and economically revamp space, and in this case, have made wise use of both indoor and outdoor dining space.

While preparation is astoundingly quickly given the complex-sounding dishes they serve, this is no fast food. It's REAL food.

We came to know of the place on an evening when it was boys' night out. My boyfriend and my youngest son were taking in a movie together at the Princess Cinéma in Cowansville, and I opted for coffee and reading at a café close by. I didn't get much reading done. That was the night I met Jonathan Reid Sévigny, who was a much-loved barista at the café. Jonathan's demeanour, ease, agility, and flow made him a treat to be around. As time progressed, we went for

coffee and soup as much for the quality as for our time spent with our host.

When we heard that Jonathan was no longer at the café, we were crestfallen. While we were thrilled that he was on a new path that he had spoken of longing for, we selfishly wished somehow his lifelong vocation was going to involve perpetually hosting us.

Our wishes were granted.

He and fellow contributors at L'Archipel, Chloé Ostiguy and Guillaume Labege were at work developing this new spot.

The trio are aged between 19 and 29 years of age. Their greenness is refreshing. It's a deep green, as healthy as their menu, their philosophy and their determination. They're chlorophyll chameleons, adapting and cultivating not just a new business, but a new/old approach to business. Something sustainable. Something hearty. No carbon. No copies.

They're in the thick of it, as their spacious parking lot is often jam-packed with folks ready for a treat (they can accommodate about fifty diners). The first time we ate at L'Archipel, Chloé's hands were as purple as her hair, after shredding beets for days. Daily fresh-pressed juice is a regular on the menu as well, y'all - forget your regular multi-vitamin, this concoction promises to extend your life expectancy, and probably give you a healthy glow while you're at it.

So, back to that brunch...

Here we were, with the poor dietary restricted folks, and it was like watching kids at Christmas. Raving over the menu, ranting over each morsel, praising the service and ambiance, and throwing down their own ratings online. We managed to eat somewhere that we absolutely adore, and to share the experience with friends we love. One exclaimed (and posted), 'This is my new favourite restaurant!'

Still stained to the gills with the produce of the moment, this trio gets their name from being three separate entities together in the same place, just like the grouping of island their namesake is taken from. L'Archipel is strength in that oh-so lucky number three, and in working with each individual's talents. And still, they dream. So much to come from this grouping of talented Townshippers.

L'Archipel is located at 406 Principale, Cowansville, 450-815-0581 for reservations, or info@archipel.maison. They are also featured on Facebook.



Jonathan Reid Sévigny



COURTESY OF JONATHAN REID SÉVIGNY

Chloé Ostiguy