

Todd A. Price
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Review: New Orleans Cake Café and Bakery



DINING OUT

**New Orleans Cake Café
and Bakery**

I was having a hard morning in the Marigny, and I blame it all on New Orleans Cake Café and Bakery. Mulling over the menu and the white board of specials, I agonized between the Spanish omelet with a biscuit and homemade jam or the French toast with pecans and orange syrup. The French toast had an inescapable appeal, but could I justify eating a slice of cake after a plate of French toast? Because how could I visit the Cake Café and Bakery without eating a piece of Steve Himelfarb's cake?

Imagine the ideal chocolate cake. A perfect balance of yellow cake and chocolate frosting. The cake is moist. The chocolate rich but not cloying and without a hint of grain. It's simple, but so hard to find. Himelfarb bakes that cake.

Himelfarb's cakes are unadorned, unpretentious and all-American. A slice of chocolate cake, white cake with strawberries or hummingbird cake can make you nostalgic for the old diners and coffee shops that made food from scratch. It's the cake you wish mom had baked for your birthday.

At lunch, I suffer no cake conundrums. The chicken salad sandwich—a textural weave of moist chicken breast, crisp celery and the occasional cool burst from grape halves—is a light, healthy lunch that leaves plenty of room for cake. A Reuben on homemade rye with slices of corned beef almost as thick as steaks and a crisp layer of pickled cabbage was more substantial, but I still found space for an excellent red velvet cupcake.

I first ate at Cake Café and Bakery a few days after it opened. It was good. Now it's great.

That morning when I faced a difficult choice, I finally opted for the French toast. The yeasty challah bread, coated in a light egg mixture and arrived over chopped pecans and a pool of syrup spiked with a bright note of citrus. I did not regret my choice, even though I couldn't manage dessert afterwards. I just took home a slice of cake for an afternoon snack. 2440 Chartres St., 943-0010, Wed-Sun 7am-3pm.

—Todd A. Price