

WHAT'S NEXT



Payne's Newest Gain

Café In the Park serves up fresh, fast flavor.

ALONG PAYNE PARK'S THREADING PATHS SITS A SPIRITED CAFÉ WITH AN EASYGOING CHARM. All day sunlight pours through tall windows while overzealous plants spill from canary yellow pots on concrete walls. Professionals refuel on coffee breaks as tots dip spoons into frosty treats. Teenage skaters roll up alongside moms with strollers, all finding common ground in their affinity for quality and community. "I want the café to play a part in all their worlds," says Simone Pollux, owner and proprietor of Café in the Park. Opening this past July, the airy café is already a prime locale for an eclectic mix looking to dine *al fresco* or grab fresh bites on the go.

ANNA RACHEL RICH | PHOTOGRAPHY BY EVAN SIGMUND



“We’ve traveled a lot and parks are such vital gathering places for communities around the world.” —*Simone Pollux*

Intermingling locally sourced ingredients whenever possible, Pollux creates a globally infused menu that emanates sophisticated simplicity. Because “the Belgians don’t follow rules when it comes to food,” Pollux prepares prosciutto, goat cheese sprinkled with pine nuts, squeezes local orange-blossom honey on a toasted baguette and names it the Zoe after her first born. It’s that good. The Cuban, drawing a crowd with its generous helping of “pork lechon,” is immersed for two days in a traditional citrus-marinade with crushed pepper, salt, garlic and oregano, later joining Swiss, pickles and their notorious mayo-mustard sauce—an utterly indulgent fix.

The café is known to win over even the tiniest taste buds with variations on childhood classics like the grilled cheese. “Not for the faint-hearted,” notes Pollux. The combination of gooey cheese stuffed inside fluffy slices of hot and crunchy sourdough is like “taking a bite of a little pillow.” After working up an appetite on the impressive circus-themed playground next door, kids bring the magic inside, adding to the café’s youthful charisma. “You wouldn’t believe how unbelievably respectful and sweet the kids coming through here are,” says Pollux. “We’ve traveled a lot and parks are such vital gathering places for communities around the world.”

With an energy level that’s palpable, Payne Park attracts the wee to the elderly, inspiring Pollux to provide the picturesque perch with sweet treats and savory eats for everyone—even the pooches. Four-legged friends flock to feast on the café’s doggie ice cream dream-in-a-bowl topped off with a bone, of course. Tails wag while bowls skid across the outdoor patio. Fresh breezes mix with aromas of robust Arabica beans and tender espresso brownies, beckoning passersby to stop and sit. “Everything about the café recharges me,” explains Pollux. “This is my passion project and I see incredible potential for this space.” **SRQ**