



CUISINE

Neighbors with taste

Taste Café moves gourmet flavors back to the 'hood

Terry Kirts

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(Excerpt)

Remember that potato salad you picked up at the grocery store for the Fourth? Did it thrill your dinner guests or languish on the buffet? Wish you'd had a gourmet store around the corner with some fresher selections?

In Indianapolis, we're deli deprived. While a few of the big box mega-marts have added bins of olives and employed sushi chefs, you can count the number of independent gourmet stores and old-school, honest-to-goodness delicatessens on one hand. Nowhere is this void felt more acutely than south of Broad Ripple. Gone are the days when you could stroll up College to Atlas to get a pound of "can't stop" pickles, "Grandma's" homemade potato salad or such curious steam-table concoctions as Reuben casserole.



The Italian grinder (\$5.95) with summer bean and sweet corn salad (\$1.50) and deviled egg (75 cents).

Seeking to fill the gap is Taste, which bills itself as a café and marketplace, though it doubles as bakery and deli as well. The brainchild of sisters Deidra Henry and Dana Henry Amos and Deidra's partner Marc Urwand, it's a welcome sight in a part of town known for good taste. Henry and Urwand did time at restaurants on both coasts before bringing their expertise back home to Henry's native Midwest. They've put a lot of thought and effort into their chic storefront in the months since they hung their "coming soon" sign in the window. Cool blues, earthy plum-colored tabletops and dark wooden chairs lend a sophisticated air to the place. Blue umbrellas at sidewalk tables extend the elegance out onto the street.

As a bakery, Taste excels at almost everything that can be put in an oven. The pain au chocolat (\$2) is a flaky croissant with a fat ribbon of bittersweet chocolate inside that's as good as any you might nibble in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower. Scones (\$1.75), too, are superb. Outsized, studded with fruits or chocolate, they're more like dense, chewy rolls than the light biscuits you're probably used to. They might scandalize a Scot, but they'll delight any Hoosier. Perhaps nothing can top the everything-but-the-kitchen-sink bread pudding that benefits from the rich diversity of baked goods left over at the day's end, everything from cinnamon buns to blueberry cheesecake.

In the deli division, Taste scores points with some of the freshest, most deliciously straightforward salads behind glass anywhere in the city. A salad of roasted beets (\$3.25) with goat cheese, champagne vinegar and chives (though it sure looks like dill) is nothing more than advertised. It's a delicious, simple mix. The orzo salad (\$3.25) tops pasta with cool Greek accompaniments like cucumber and mint, and a hearty gemelli salad (\$3.25) contains almost more crunchy snap peas and deep-red tomatoes than pasta. Not to mention the short but nicely varied list of sandwiches, green salads and soups, as well as deviled eggs — just like Mom's but with capers. A stellar curried chicken salad (\$5.50) comes chock-full of crunchy apples and the sweet undercurrent of tarragon.

If anyone doubted the locals could support yet another restaurant on the same block, just try to get a seat at Taste during the lunch rush. The creative trio at Taste has more than filled the final vacancy at 52nd Street. They've seriously upped the ante on deli offerings, bringing a wealth of gourmet flavors back to a neighborhood that can, clearly, appreciate them.

Taste Café and Marketplace

5164 N. College Ave.
925-2233

Tuesday-Friday, 7 a.m.-3 p.m.
Saturday-Sunday, 8 a.m.-3 p.m.

Food: 3 1/2 stars
Atmosphere: 4 stars
Service: 4 stars