

Vendor Spotlight: Little Radish



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Monday, September 9, 2019

The desire for healthy, fresh and locally sourced food is more prevalent than ever. At Little Radish, they pride themselves on serving gorgeous farm to table food, including soups, salads, and the occasional pastry. We spoke to the owner, Michele Diaz-Ware, to find out more about her culinary background, passion for food, and where she found the inspiration to start this business.

How did you get your start in the food industry?

I would work in restaurant kitchens during the off season while I was modeling for Ford Models. I was thinking about going to culinary school, but my friend told me to go to pastry school instead. He said if you ever open a restaurant and your pastry chef quits, you'll know how to make pastries. So I went to the Institute of Culinary Education and from there I worked under David Carmichael at Oceana. Then I opened my own cake business making children's birthday cakes in the New York and Jersey City areas. Eventually I started cooking at

a big corporate company and that's where I learned how to really run a business.

What made you transition from pastries to healthy foods?

I started to develop a sensitivity to gluten and so did my daughter. I didn't want her to become one of those chicken finger and French fry kids either. So, we started to eliminate those types of foods and eating better around my daughter so she would have healthier options.

Do you still make pastries and will we see any at the market?

I do still make pastries. I've made some pastries already, including a nectarine tart and a tomato galette, which were both gluten free. They sold out within the first hour of us opening.

What brought you to Ferry Market?

Ten years ago, I worked with two guys who were pit masters in Stockton, NJ, which is where I learned how to smoke meat. I met Tom Sciascia, who owns Sciascia Confection in Ferry Market, through those guys. One day earlier this year I was in Ferry Market buying macaroons with my daughter from Sciascia Confections. I saw Tom and we started talking about how I wanted to buy a food truck and travel the country selling fresh food. He told me I should have my business here at the market. He started to show me a booth and said he thought my stuff would really work at Ferry Market. He opened up that door, for which I am very grateful.

What do you like about Ferry Market?

It's the ease of having the customers stroll in. When you're starting out with a new restaurant, you have to rely on word of mouth for people to try it. Here people will just walk in and see what you have to offer. It makes it easier to start your business. What is starting to happen is that stores are calling in to place orders. That's pretty cool.

Where do you source your ingredients?

I started out using a small produce company called Citrus Produce that sources produce from five or six farms throughout Pennsylvania. I try to source as much as possible from local farms. Slowly but surely, I went to different farms. I've used Sansone's Farm Market, Village Farms in

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Princeton, and Carversville Farm Foundation, which is a non-profit farm in Mechanicsville.

Why is fresh and locally grown food a priority for you?

The quality is better. By far the quality is much better when you know where it's coming from and when it comes in locally. It's as fresh as it can get. You can taste the difference when it comes to fresh food. The shelf life is always a little bit longer and people want fresh food. When I put out the tomatoes that I just bought on Saturday in the case pan and people walk by, they want to buy them.

How did you go about designing your menu?

I wanted it to be small, taste good and be consistent. I understood that it takes a lot to run a business. I knew if I put just four things on the menu it was just going to be consistent. Consistency is key. I also chose items that I knew could be sourced year-round.

Your soups change daily. How do you decide what soups to serve each day?

In the past I've done a turkey chili soup, carrot ginger soup, coconut corn soup. I haven't really planned the soups, it's based on what ingredients I have to use. My biggest hit was a vegan tortilla soup, which I didn't expect. There was a family who came in that weekend and the kids had a dairy allergy. They came by my booth everyday to ask for the vegan tortilla soup. I had a little bit left over, but not enough to sell to other customers, so I kept it and saved it for them.

Do you cater to clients with dietary restrictions?

Yes. If you look at my menu, it is all vegetarian. I have a lot of vegetarian friends and I remember sitting with them in a restaurant. One said how frustrating it is to ask for a salad without the meat, but still having to pay for the meat. When a vegan comes to my booth, I offer to add another grain or vegetable to their salad. I always try to compensate dietary needs.

What soup or salad would you recommend to a new customer?

I usually ask them what they're in the mood for, because they're all so different, and then just work from there. I'll also recommend a salad if it complements the soup.

Do you have plans to expand beyond soup and salads?

Saturdays are the busiest times in the market, so my goal is to introduce more fruit pies. I will try, depending on how busy I am, to incorporate more pastries too.

What are the components of a good salad?

The main component is good ingredients. Period. A salad needs good ingredients and a well-balanced dressing. I also believe they should have some kind of protein, a fat, a starch and obviously veggies in every salad.

What is your favorite salad and why?

It changes. Lately it has been the Caesar salad. I really like the Little Middle East, but without farro. Farro is the only thing that isn't gluten free on my menu. I actually like them all, I feel like all four salads have a purpose. It really depends on the day of the week and what I feel like that day.

What is your best-selling salad?

The Little Middle East. I think it's because it is so different than all the other salads and it has chickpeas two ways. I also have a lot of vegans ordering this salad because of the dressing. The dressing is creamy like a Caesar, but without the anchovies or egg in a traditional Caesar.

Where do you get your inspiration for creating new recipes?

I read a lot about food and learn about all the components. That's how I get my inspiration. I learn about different kind of veggies that are out there or see what's in seasonal. Sometimes I'll look at somebody's restaurant and read through their menu or research different recipes. I won't follow the recipe, but look at what ingredients work together. I also look at farms to see what they have to offer too.

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What inspires the names of your salads?

I wanted to have a kind of play on words, but still let the customer know what's going to be in it. Like the "Call Me Blue", it makes sense that there will be bleu cheese in it.

Do you make everything from scratch?

I do. It's funny, in the past I've run out of items, like the tahini dressing for Little Middle East. So I would suggest to people to use this white wine vinaigrette that is very light tasting, but still complements the salad. People are more forthcoming when they see that you are waiting for the product instead of it always being there.

Why is it important to serve gorgeous food?

I think if it is colorful, healthy and clean, the people that eat healthy will notice it and take it into consideration when they're choosing where they're going to eat. Nothing is worse than when you go to a salad bar and the stuff looks old. Or when you go to a restaurant to order a salad and the place looks dirty.

How do you make your dishes aesthetically pleasing?

I make the salads the way I would like to see them being served. I like it to look colorful and make sure that there's every color of the rainbow in the salad. If I won't eat it, I'm not going to serve it. That's always been my philosophy.

What is one thing you want people to know about your company?

If anybody truly has any dietary needs or have any allergies that restrict their diet, when you see me there, start a conversation. I'm really sensitive to people with food allergies and dietary needs because everybody needs to eat, we all need food to survive. I will work with just about anybody and their dietary needs. Tell me what allergies you have and I will one hundred and fifty percent accommodate any restriction you have.

Little Radish proves that eating healthy can be fast, easy, and delicious. In minutes, you can have a bowl of soup or salad featuring local produce prepared fresh, just for you. All of their salads are available as a vegetarian or gluten-

free option. They welcome guests with special dietary needs. After just one bite, you'll fall in love with Little Radish's farm to table philosophy. Check out their social media for the soup of the day and stop by on your next lunch break for a quick bite!