

RENEWED ROOST IS OPEN FOR BUSINESS

TILL's bolstered cafe space brings more artisanal coffee to north Springs

BY MICAH REDFIELD



The espresso bar at TILL's re-envisioned ROOST. The cafe hopes to expand artisanal coffee options in north Colorado Springs. Photo by Micah Redfield



Vinnie Snyder of Peak Place Café and Hold Fast Coffee Co. Roasters works his magic behind the bar as he trains the Roost staff. Photo by Micah Redfield

Emblazoned upon the newly renovated café's wall, a creation by local artist, Katie Sturgis, is the adopted definition of "roost:" "a place to convene or linger; an escape or haven." This is TILL's vision for the adjoined and recalibrated cafe space that bears the name, The ROOST.

Finding locally independent coffee on the north side of Colorado Springs is almost as hard as predicting Colorado weather. Yet this is what TILL Kitchen, the year-old restaurant emporium, is attempting to offer — a newly bolstered cafe space where, they hope, north Springs residents will flock to for locally roasted coffees and housemade baked goods.

"We on the north end of town don't really have coffee houses," said PR consultant, Mimi Wheeler. "Yet, TILL was an anti-chain movement originally. So, it was logical for us

to branch into a coffee house and create a community space."

While TILL has offered a coffee space since its inception in the summer of last year, Wheeler said it had always been secondary to the restaurant.

Secondary no longer, The ROOST is now promoting a full menu of local thirdwave coffee while sourcing from three local roasters: Switchback Coffee Roasters, Hold Fast Coffee Co. and Mission Coffee Roasters. Eight coffees are available from their manual brew bar. The requisite caffeinated and decaffeinated espresso — usually blends from Hold Fast — are pulled from the Linea PB espresso machine. Meanwhile, on offer are various housemade pastries, delicacies and bakery items — all sourced mere feet away from TILL's rambling kitchens.

On The ROOST's menu the "Caramelita" candy bar is said to be among the best sellers. "It's like a lovely candybar of oats and caramel and chocolate," said Heather Sheridan, head pastry chef, who was concocting "gluten friendly" macaroons in her commercial mixer. "It goes with everything, and we can pretend it's good for you," she joked. Also a best seller, the seasonal pumpkin spiced vegan scone, was a special mention by Sheridan. "You gotta give the people what they want."

Working alongside the pastry chef was Austin Figge, the head baker, who was crafting sheets of puffed pastry, into which, 3 pounds of butter are required for each 40 croissants. "I do this pretty much every other day," said Figge as he passed the to-be-flakey dough back and forth through the automatic rolling machine.

Since opening in June of last year, TILL has had a somewhat tumultuous journey while trying to establish their true identity. Are they a restaurant? Are they a community space? Are they a purveyor of locally sourced foods? Are they a sushi destination? How about gelato? Some concepts have soared, some have tanked. But what about coffee?

In the reconfigured cafe space, The ROOST is striving to leverage local and established coffee talent, like Vinnie Snyder of Peak Place Café and Hold Fast Coffee Co., which has been contracted to lead TILL baristas in building momentum at The ROOST. "This is the perfect venue for a north-side coffee experience," Snyder said.

In explaining the feasibility of thirdwave coffee — meaning a high-quality, artisanal product like wine — in northern Colorado Springs, Snyder heralded the idea of being flexible with the experience. "I think you can contextualize third-wave anywhere as long as you are not too hard headed about it. If you're going to serve only 6-ounce drinks with no added flavorings then I don't think you're going to make it. But as long as you are able to contextualize and have some flexibility, you can absolutely succeed it up here."

If The ROOST is to succeed, Snyder believes a broad array of drink preferences are to be accommodated.

Snyder noted the various coffee flavorings behind the espresso bar. "Here at The ROOST we have mochas and lavender syrups. I've make just as many 6-ounce cappuccinos as mochas. This hour alone I've made both an espresso and a gingerbread mocha."

In being asked for the secret in overcoming the challenge of maintaining a sustainable quality of product and service, Snyder said the requirement of passing along a sense of ownership to TILL baristas.

"The magic sauce is one ally who really gets it. If you can create that ownership with someone in the cafe, then it's so much easier. If you can get that one person, that kinda changes the game." That one person is The ROOST's head barista, Michael Mussi, who deftly crafted a doppio espresso of Hold Fast's "Rock

Solid” blend, and a pour-over of the naturally processed Ethiopian by Switchback. Mussi’s team will be in to open The ROOST at 7 every morning to slake the neighborhood’s caffeine needs.