

The Des Moines Register

Datebook: 12 places to visit this summer

► 5 best bets for this weekend ► French restaurant Django opens in D.M.



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DINING

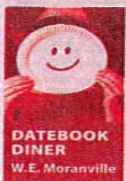
What do readers think?

Post a review of Django in our online dining guide. Go to DesMoinesRegister.com/django.

Django sets joie-de-vivre on 10th Street



DOUG WELLS/REGISTER PHOTOS



DATEBOOK DINER
W.E. Moranville

With the 100 percent French Django restaurant opening in the Hotel Fort Des Moines, swanky Josephs Jewelers set to open across the street and classy condos nearby, 10th Street is starting to feel like a slice of Paris's Right Bank.

Chris Place, formerly of Forty Three, heads up the kitchen, and the team of owners includes George Formoro of Centro, South Union and the Gateway Market.

Atmosphere: A raw seafood bar handsomely anchors the room, but look around — the place is shot through with other brasserie-like gems, from romantic red banquette seating to shiny brass tubing. The restrooms even have walls lined in bright-white tile like in the Paris Metro.

The restaurant's detailed ceiling moldings have been restored. I also love the way the designers left the floor a mix of all the surfaces that came before it — a

Preview

Preliminary visit; not yet rated

little '80s-esque green marble hits patches of mid-century terrazzo and so on. What better way to tap into the feel of Europe than to let a space's deep history emerge?

Menu: Bistro, café and brasserie standbys jam the menu, including both fine-dining classics, such as Tournedos Rossini, and casual-café favorites like the Croque Monsieur sandwich. Geographically born and bred specialties, such as cassoulet and bouillabaisse, tap into the fiercely regional side of French cooking.

Sublime Bites: Fat pancetta, creamy fromage blanc and slithery caramelized onions float atop a pillowy flatbread in a dish misidentified on the menu as a Provencal tart. Actually, it was an Alsatian specialty — and, in fact, a chef from Alsace, by way of

Florida, had come up to help train the kitchen crew.

The roast chicken — a \$14 revelation — brought exquisite touches of tiny sweet pearl onions, startlingly bright-orange baby carrots and, most notably, creamy and ultra-smooth pureed potatoes (a treat in our culinary epoch of "smashed" potatoes). Sautéed foie gras jiggled atop beef tenderloin medallions for a classic take on Tournedos Rossini.

Faux-Pas? Maybe the profiteroles were tough, and the scalloped potatoes arrived lukewarm one try and underdone the next. I'm not going to get my *culottes* in a *boule* about these and other opening-night flaws, for an overall joie-de-vivre was firmly in place.

Bottom Line: Squint just right on the way home, and the KCCI Weather Beacon glimmers like the Eiffel Tower in the distance. This place can make a diner feel that good.

Django

ADDRESS: 210 10th St.

HOURS: 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. weekdays; 11 a.m. to 1 a.m. Friday and Saturday; 4 to 10 p.m. Sunday

PHONE: (515) 288-0268

CUISINE: All French, all the time

NOISE LEVEL: Bustling, but not obtrusive

ALCOHOL SERVED: Sparkling wine by glass; reasonably priced French-focused wine list

ATTIRE: Show some style

DISABLED ACCESSIBILITY: Yes

FAMILY FRIENDLY: Do your kids like escargot? *Non?* A burger may do.

PARKING: On street

SMOKE-FREE: Yes

RECOMMENDED DISHES ▼



Tournedos Rossini: \$26



Roasted Chicken: \$14