



EDITOR'S PICK

LET'S EAT

In Windsor, new Branch + Daughter bridges farm to table with pizza

By Victoria Davis, Special to the Cap Times Aug 15, 2021

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The newest market in Windsor, just northeast of Madison, started with an Italian restaurant. Or rather, the building of one.

“Every chef secretly wants to have their own place, whether they say it or not,” said Judson Branch, a chef of 20 years whose culinary journey has taken him throughout the country and recently landed him and his wife in Sun Prairie.

“But I always said it's got to be the right time, the right location, everything has to feel right to do it,” Branch said. “As soon as we moved to this community and saw that Italian place, I was like, ‘That building would be the perfect 30-seater.’”

“That Italian place” was Papino's Italian Restaurant, which Judson and his wife, Monique, passed every day on their way to their daughter Vada’s daycare. The couple closed on the building this past February and did an entire interior and exterior

remodel. Branch + Daughter opened in July off Traveller Trail, at the intersection of Windsor and Lake roads.

Branch + Daughter — named, in part, to honor Vada — is a place to not only indulge in specialty pizzas featuring ingredients like marinated figs, blended meatballs and garlic butter clams. It’s also a retail shop for locally made specialty items like dairy-free cashew queso, squid ink sauce, fresh Greenbush Bakery doughnuts (\$6.99). There’s whipped raspberry and cinnamon honey (\$12) from Marie's Bees, as well as coffee, soaps, apparel and canned cocktails.

And at their butcher counter and deli case, there are meats from nearby Wisconsin farmers.

[Tasting the Wisconsin State Fair, from Pink Squirrels to bacon-cinnamon curds]

“It was very interesting to think that I could offer something in the community that wasn’t here, like really good pizza as well as a specialty grocer,” Judson said. “I was always annoyed that I had to drive 30 minutes to Madison or Middleton to get what I was looking for.



A customer orders pizza at Branch + Daughter, located at 6601 Traveler Trail in Windsor.

RUTHIE HAUGE

“The goal was to have items here nearby that you could just come and get, like that one-off fish sauce or truffle oil.”

Monique also worked in the hospitality industry; she met Judson while they were both working for Marriott. “The other part of this was the local farmer piece, giving them another place to sell their goods in this area,” she said. “We didn't realize how many farms are so close by.”

Working with farms like Lovick Family Farm in DeForest, Fischer Family Farm in Cambria and Whiteside Ranch in Waunakee, Branch + Daughter was founded on four principles: the humane treatment of animals, low-waste methodologies, educating the community on food preparation for better health and wellbeing, as well as supporting local food, employees and community development.

Judson learned his food philosophy growing up in central Pennsylvania with a family of hunters, fishers and gardeners who believed in hunting to eat, not for sport. Judson wants Branch + Daughter to help close the gap between farm and table.





A kitchen staffer prepares a Salted Pig pizza at Branch + Daughter in Windsor.

RUTHIE HAUGE



“At the bigger hotels I worked at, we had relationships with farmers, but not nearly as intimate as I've been with some of these farmers that I've started working with,” said Judson. He was formerly the corporate chef for Kalahari, based in the Dells.

[Let's Eat: Jason's Jerk brings habanero heat to Jamaican-style tacos]

“We have met all our local farmers and almost all our local product producers except a few that are two or three hours away who we hope to meet soon,” Monique added. “We can go to the actual farms and meet these families and see every piece of their operation.”

Judson handles the butchery, and Branch + Daughter currently offers 12 cuts of beef including sirloin, filet mignon, tongue, as well as dry-aged options. They sell pork, poultry, lamb and seafood. But most popular so far is the deli case, priced per

pound, which features salami rosa (\$10.99), roast beef (\$10.99), pastrami (\$9.99), rosemary ham (\$11.99), red chili pork (\$7.99 per container) and more.

Pizzas are available for takeout, including a cauliflower crust option. These are also made with many of the local meats from farm partners, such as the bacon on Branch + Daughter's Salted Pig (\$18), G-MA's Meat Pie (\$20) and even the New Haven Clam (\$22), which has been a surprising favorite among kid customers.

“I can't believe how many comments I keep getting about how the kids are eating the clams on the pizza,” said Monique. “It blows my mind.”

While unexpected, it's also a step toward the future Judson and Monique hope for with Branch + Daughter.

“Food is experiential,” Judson said. “It doesn't matter where you are. You're always gonna remember the first time you had x, y or z. Like the times you visited grandma's house and ate her meatloaf. ... I want some kid to remember the first time they had pizza at Branch + Daughter.”

Judson said they plan to add sandwiches as well as shakes and ice cream to the menu soon, as soon as he feels they've mastered their pizzas.



The Salted Pig pizza at Branch + Daughter is topped with "face bacon," marinated figs, port wine-candied onions, arugula, pecorino Romano cheese and pistachio pesto.

RUTHIE HAUGE

“I would rather do one thing very well and then we’ll build on that and move on to the next thing,” said Judson. “I want everybody that comes here to have some of the best pizza they can get in this area. You have to start with a foundation and build. That’s always been my philosophy.”

He’s optimistic about what comes next.

“It’s been a dream,” he said. “We’ve only been open for a matter of weeks and I feel confident that what we brought is a huge change to the community. And the community is really embracing this.”

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Branch + Daughter

6601 Traveler Trail, Windsor

(608) 842-0139

branchanddaughter.com

HOURS

Tuesday-Thursday 11 a.m.-9 p.m.

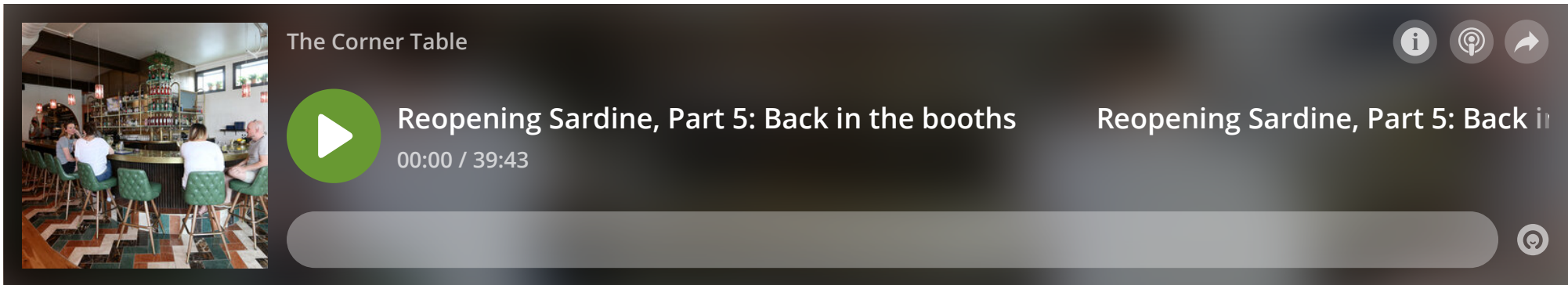
Friday-Saturday 11 a.m.-10 p.m.

Sunday 11 a.m.-9 p.m.

Monday closed

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