



FOOD & DRINK

Let's Eat: Take a walk to Wildwood, a Stoughton cafe with rustic touches



By Victoria Davis | Special to The Capital Times Jan 6, 2019  4 min to read



Ryan Baughn, a co-owner of Wildwood Cafe in Stoughton, makes espresso at the cafe he runs with his wife, Stephanie.

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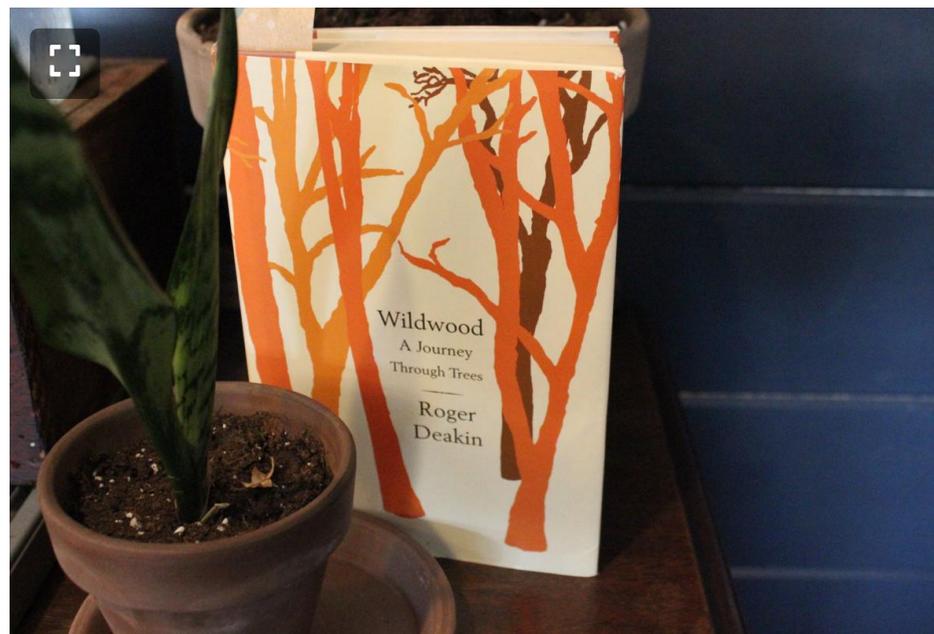
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Madison's sushi restaurants aim to please with ever more enticing ingredients, from kiwi sauce to sweet potatoes and tobiko in a rainbow of colors.

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When Stephanie and Ryan Baughn were brainstorming ideas for their Stoughton cafe, the list of names, they said, was “exhaustive.”

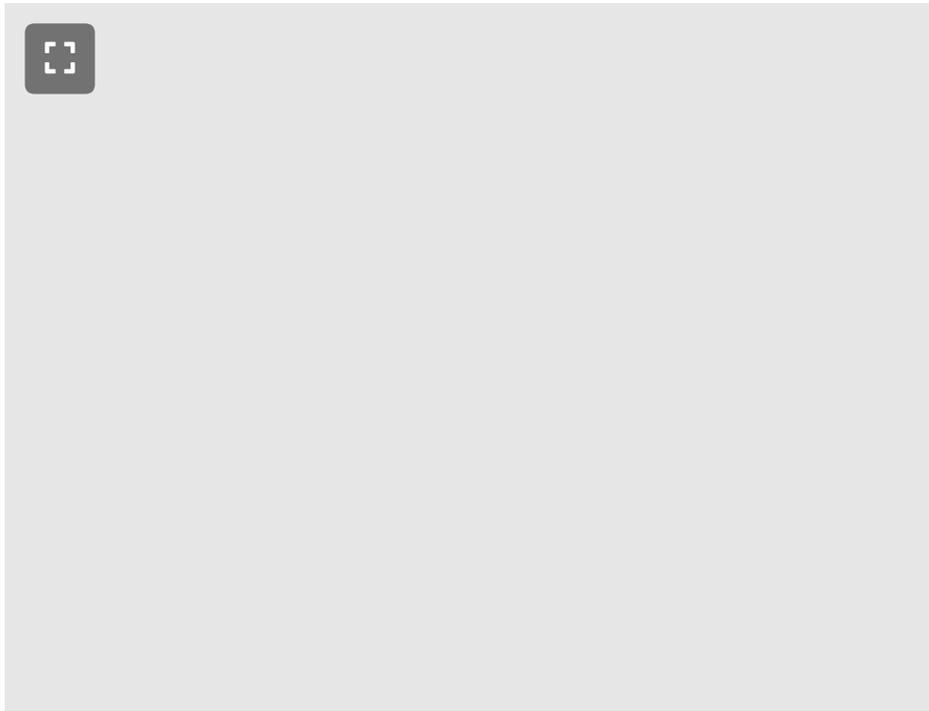
The couple eventually settled on Wildwood, which shares the same title as Roger Deakin's book “Wildwood: A Journey Through Trees.” Stephanie, a literary enthusiast, says the parallel was more coincidental than planned. Now, Deakin's hardcover autobiography rests on the cafe's water counter, ready for borrowed reading.



Wildwood Cafe shares a name and natural inspiration with Richard Deakin's book.

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“We probably spent less time thinking about the name than we did about the atmosphere,” said Ryan, who is originally from Seattle and has worked in the coffee industry since he was 17 years old. “Life is hard in a lot of ways, especially in a place like Wisconsin which has a hard couple of months with winter. We wanted a comforting place that also honored people’s innate nature to be wild and adventurous.”



At Wildwood, there are wild flowers on every rustic, wooden table and wilderness books on any open counter or white windowsill.

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At Wildwood, there are wild flowers on every rustic, wooden table and wilderness books on any open counter or white windowsill. The natural light and vintage paintings add a cabin-like feel to this cafe, located on Stoughton's Forrest Street. One of the cafe walls is dedicated to selling travel mugs, flasks, Ruby's ground coffee and more. There is also a 1994 Marzocco espresso machine that Ryan customized and refurbished himself.

"When I was 16, my mom took me to the National Gallery of Art in DC and they had this really beautiful basement cafe that got a lot of light and had a lot of plants," said Stephanie. "My mom and I had cappuccinos in ceramic cups with biscotti and I just felt so intellectual and sophisticated.

"It felt like Paris and a perfect marriage of everything that I loved. We wanted to bring that concept here."

The aesthetic, inspired by the outdoorsy personalities of both Ryan and Stephanie, is not Wildwood's only nature-focused feature. Wildwood has begun a "no straw challenge" as part of a commitment to ecological and environmental stewardship. And a gluten-free breakfast menu, pastries and specialty coffee form the organic core of



In addition to cream cheese danishes (\$3.75) and maple pecan scones (\$3.50), Wildwood offers gluten-free brownies, cookies and even gluten-free avocado toast

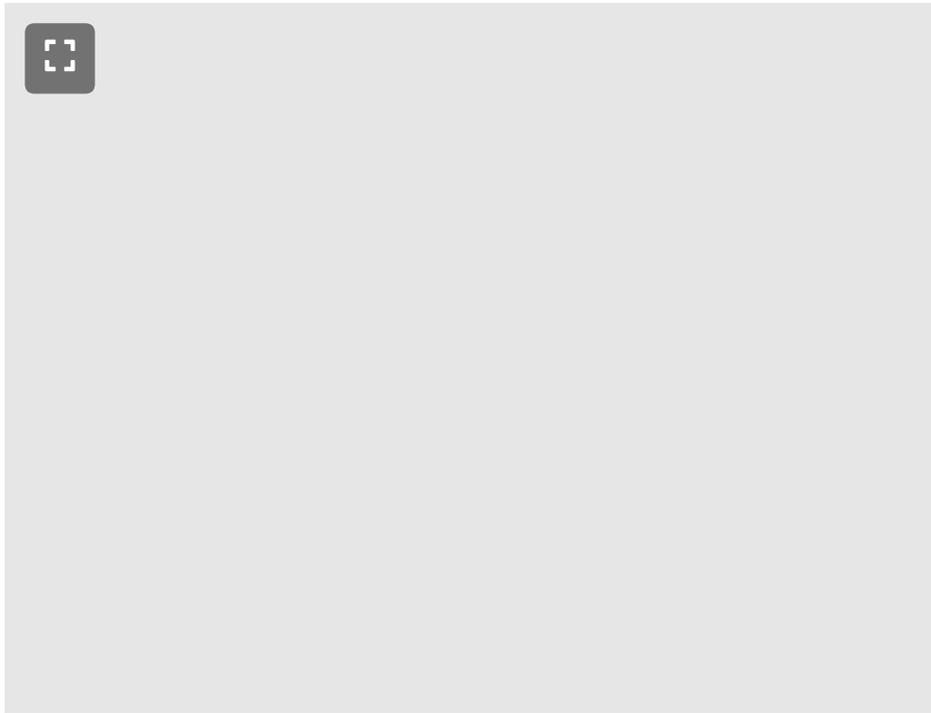
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the Baughns' cafe.

“We had our gluten-free waffles right off the bat,” said Stephanie of the cafe’s honey amaranth waffles (\$6.50).

“That was important to me because the son of our former nextdoor neighbor had to eat gluten free from a really young age and was always left out of eating at restaurants.

So I knew I wanted at least one gluten-free food option.
Man, did people come out of the woodwork!”



Ryan and Stephanie Baughn opened Wildwood Cafe on Forrest Street in Stoughton.

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It’s been eight months since Wildwood opened in May during the weekend of Stoughton’s Syttende Mai Festival and the cafe is still going strong.

“I’ve never been a line cook but that’s essentially what we become when things get busy,” said Stephanie, who helps her employees bake the pastries every morning. “We come up with new menu ideas every couple of weeks. I’d love to be able to give everything a gluten-free option eventually.”



Wildwood Cafe contains a 1994 Marzocco espresso machine that Ryan Baughn customized and refurbished himself.

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They’re well on their way. In addition to cream cheese danishes (\$3.75) and maple pecan scones (\$3.50), Wildwood

offers gluten-free brownies, cookies and even gluten-free avocado toast (\$7.50), one of the more popular menu items. Gluten-free pumpkin coffee cake (\$3.95) is also a favorite, with a batter that tastes a little like gingerbread baked and molded into a hearty cake. Sprinkled with flaxseed and drizzled with a light layer of glaze, the cake might not taste sugar free healthy, but with the exception of the glaze, it is.

Stephanie and her employees at Wildwood are working to make the Southern-style breakfast sandwiches gluten-free. Stephanie uses the same recipe her grandmother has used for years to make her most recent buttermilk biscuit creation, called Power To The People (\$8.75) after [a song by Patti Smith](#). Made with a fried egg and pimento cheese, the biscuit comes with sauteed “power greens,” a mix of baby kale, mizuna, spinach and arugula. It’s worth the extra \$1.50 to add a couple slices of bacon.

“My friends and I love Patti Smith,” said Stephanie, who also serves her biscuits plain with jam or honey. “I joke around that she’s my spirit animal, but she’d probably be mortified if she ever heard someone say that.”

Ryan and Stephanie’s four sons, Sam, Oliver, Felix and



The Baughns' Wildwood Cafe serves omelettes and breakfast sandwiches on Forrest Street in Stoughton.

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Jasper, all helped get Wildwood off the ground during the summer. The boys' ages range from 9 to 16, and they did everything from bussing tables to cooking breakfast sandwiches and pulling cappuccinos. The cafe lifestyle has become an integral part of the Baughn family. Wildwood is their home away from home.

“We couldn’t have done it without them, and I like seeing how they enjoy the atmosphere,” said Ryan. “There’s something comforting about sitting and drinking a warm drink. I’ve seen Jasper drink (coffee) straight black too.”



"We come up with new menu ideas every couple of weeks," said Stephanie Baughn, co-owner of Wildwood Cafe in Stoughton.

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There’s a cultural idea of the “third place,” a concept developed by Ray Oldenburg and popularized by Starbucks in the 1990s. It’s the idea that people have home and work

and a “third place,” a more relaxed, social space where communities come together. That’s the driving force behind Wildwood.

“It’s been so dark and dreary lately and people are in need of a place that gets them out of the house, out of hibernation mode, and back into connecting with other people,” Ryan said. “You see people every day that you want to talk to, and this has been a conduit for those relationships.

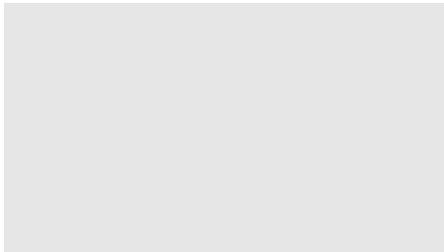
“It’s been very rewarding to realize that and to see our goals coming to fruition.”



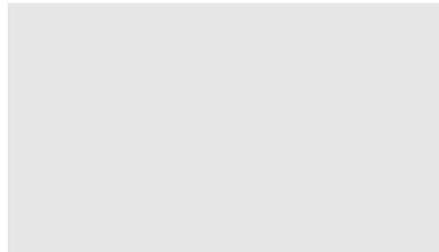
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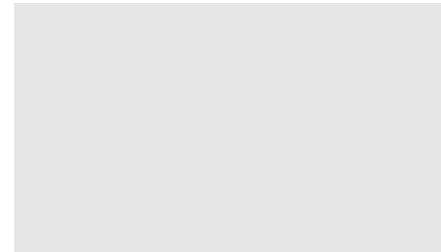
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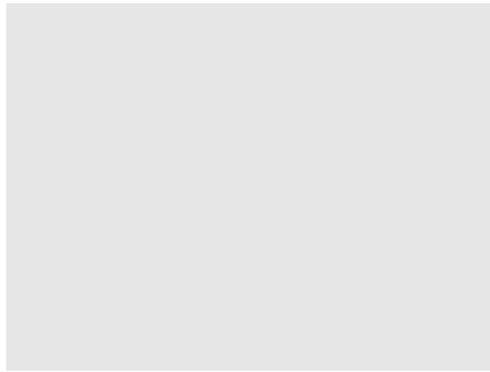
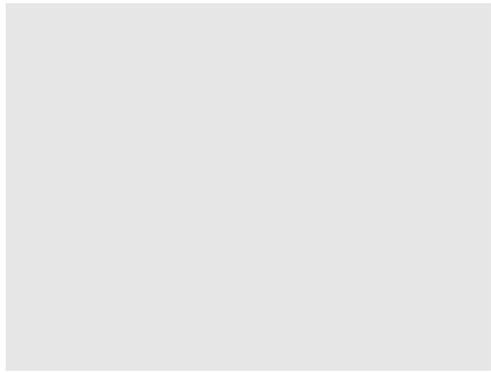
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