In September 2019, Ithaca College senior Max Lichtenstein won a “Best Barista” award, which is decided by a readers’ vote in the Ithaca Times, for his work as a barista at Chatty Cathy. Lichtenstein has worked at the coffee shop, located on Eddy Street in Ithaca, since September 2016. Besides working as a barista, Lichtenstein is also an All-American goalkeeper on the college soccer team.

“ar

Interview has been edited for length and clarity.

AR: Could you tell me a little bit about what it’s like to be a barista at Chatty Cathy?
ML: It’s a good time. We have aca bowls, smoothies and other kinds of bowls as well, so not just coffee, but you definitely have to know the coffee. And my boss right away taught me so much, and it’s definitely just a positive vibe in the store with good music playing all the time. And we have really good ingredients and really good coffee, so, when people come in, they’re pretty pleased and satisfied with the experience they have.

AR: Why did you initially start working there?
ML: I had two friends who worked there and they used to tell me about it, and then once I spoke to the boss, [Milly Papachry- santhou] — she was from Miami, which is about 30 minutes from me, where I grew up — so we had a connection there, and then she was really flexible with hours. It’s just a very low-key experience to be working.

AR: Have you worked as a barista before?
ML: No, I’ve never worked with food or coffee ever in my life.

AR: So now working as a barista is there a specific drink that you enjoy making?
ML: Yeah, actually I didn’t drink coffee, and now I drink coffee all the time. And I’ve been known to make a pretty good mocha latte, so if it’s cold or cold, that’s probably my drink of choice.

AR: Do you think you’ve found it easy to balance your schedule as a student-athlete with your time at Chatty Cathy?
ML: Luckily enough, my boss is really lenient with my work schedule, especially in the fall during season, but also like working and like staying busy. I don’t like just doing nothing. So on Mondays, I don’t have classes and didn’t have practice, and now in the spring, I’ll work more hours. But it was definitely easy enough … to work both as a student-athlete and as a barista.

AR: So what was it like to win the award?
ML: At first, my boss sent me a screen that was all green, and said it was put out, and she wrote my name in and was like, “Get people to vote.” You can vote through a link online.

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BY BRONTË COOK

When Kevin Adelman enrolled at Ithaca Col- lege in 2010, he did not have much experience cooking. Now, nearly a decade later, he and his twin brother, Corey, spend nearly every night making specialty tacos for customers at Bicker- ing Twins, a Latin American bar and restaurant they founded on The Commons.

Since the restaurant’s doors opened in 2017, Bickering Twins has gained a local reputation for its creative cocktails and taco fatty fillings, which include braised beef tongue, toasted pineapple and slow-cooked beef cheek. But the owners said the restaurant has also had its fair share of challenges.

“Everything that could go wrong has gone wrong,” Kevin said. “Like going a whole night without a dishwasher, major equipment break- down, small fires — crazy, stupid things you couldn’t really ever imagine.”

When Corey and Kevin first embarked on their journey into the culinary world, they knew it would be hard. They also knew that it would allow them to build a career around their passions: food, fun and Latin American culture.

One of the ways they helped fuel the Latin American culture when he studied abroad in Bolivia during college. He ended up loving it so much that he lived there on and off for two years. He said that when he came back to the United States, he was missing a relationship with “South American flavors.”

“I wanted to be connected,” he said. “I couldn’t really find a way to do it at first.”

So he turned to the food industry for a job. Despite his limited culinary experience, he found one in the kitchen of a local restaurant. From there, he worked his way up in the indus- tries. In 2015, Corey joined him in Ithaca, and the two raised the idea of starting a catering, pop-up company. This was the beginning of the brothers’ work to make Latin-inspired food.

“We were looking for a concept,” Kevin said. “And, like I said, I was always looking for something to draw back to Latin America, so we started with Pan-Latin food.”

Using the culinary skills they had obtained at previous jobs, the brothers dove right in. They did their research and learned how to make food from many different regions in Latin America before narrowing their focus to Mexican cuisine, specifically. Their menu includes encinitas, a kind of meat, great chicken mole and a variety of creative taco plates.

“We had been reading a lot of interesting Mexican cookbooks,” Kevin said. “You can get your hands on almost all the ingredients, even obscure ones, because of the large Mexican population in the country. So we started getting things like avocado leaves, all kinds of thilies and Mexican chocolate.”

The brothers also did market research to make sure their food genuinely represented the cuisine of Mexico.

“We really shy away from using the word ‘authentic,’” Kevin said. “But we try to make our flavors the way you would find them in Mexico by using those ingredients and doing it the way that people have done it forever.”

For the first few months, the brothers began selling their food at the Ithaca Farmers Market. They said it was there that they really began to feel the impact of Bickering Twins’ presence in the community.

“The word community is thrown around so much, but that’s when I really felt a sense of community,” Corey said. “It was really cool to meet farmers and other cooks and food vendors. There’s a younger generation of people cooking and making things and everything. We met a lot of them at the Farmers Market.”

Around that time, they held their first pop-up at Lincoln Street Coffee in Fall Creek. Soon after, they expanded to Expanded to The Carriage House Cafe in Collegetown.

The following year, Bickering Twins on The Commons was born. The restaurant is located on North Cayuga Street.

“Just taking a big leap when we opened the brick and mortar,” Corey said. “There was a certain amount of fear in doing it.”

COREY: “Are we too young? Or is ‘it the right time’? We didn’t know the answer. I just knew it was going to be hard.”

Corey was right about it being hard, but, luckily, they also had some help. Laura Phillips, a server and front of house supervisor at the restaurant, had been with the brothers since they opened their location on The Commons. She took on a managerial role.

“I helped with some of the more physical as- pects — hiring staff, interviewing people, setting things up so that we could open,” Phillips said. “I’ve been with them ever since.”

Even with the help of a small team, the brothers said, opening the restaurant came with a number of challenges, like maintaining staff members and learning how to negotiate rent deals.

Now, two years later, the risks seem to have paid off.

Phillips said that seeing regulars who visit the restaurant is one of her favorite parts of the job, and she does her best to make sure they feel appreciated.

She said she does this by making a point to remember their previous orders and recom- mending new items on the menu.

“The atmosphere you create in a restaurant counts probably as much the food counts,” she said. “So if you’re creating an atmosphere where people feel noticed and comfortable, that’s really important.”

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From left, twins Kevin and Corey Adelman cook up a shrimp taco in their kitchen at Bickering Twins Mexican Restaurant and Bar on North Cayuga Street in Ithaca.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2019
A2 | FOOD INSERT

BROTHERS SERVE UP LATIN-INSPIRED FOOD

BY BRONTË COOK

Senior Max Lichtenstein, who works at Chatty Cathy Cafe, won a “Best Barista” award from the Ithaca Times in September.

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In 2019, eight new restaurants opened in downtown Ithaca and five restaurants closed. The turnover of restaurants is because of high rents, competition and the personal toll of owning a business.

BY MADISON FERNANDEZ

From pizzerias to Moroccan concepts, Hicham Oulida, Towers Marketplace retail manager at Ithaca College, has owned six restaurants — five of which are in Ithaca — over the past decade. He said his main reason for closing these businesses is simple: He did not have a sufficient work-life balance.

"You live in the restaurant," he said. "The restaurants own you. You don't own the restaurant."

Dedicating enough time to owning and managing a restaurant is just one of the many reasons that contribute to restaurants’ longevities. In 2019, there were only 116 restaurants in downtown Ithaca, said Gary Ferguson, executive director of the Downtown Ithaca Business Alliance.

He also said two restaurants expanded or moved, and five closed in downtown Ithaca. Ferguson said that while there has been movement in the downtown restaurant scene — the area comprised of The Commons and the surrounding streets — this year compared to previous years, it is not too atypical. He said this reflects the overall movement of businesses downtown.

So far this year, there have been 24 new businesses and 12 that have closed, which includes the number of restaurants that have opened and closed.

"The key for me is how long do things stay vacant, and can we refill them?" he said.

There are 65 restaurants listed in the DIA dining guide, Ferguson said. He said that the No. 1 traffic generator downtown is the food and beverage operators and that at least a million trips are taken annually to downtown restaurants.

"That's a big chunk of business for a little tiny area," Ferguson said. "It is clearly not one of our biggest niches and segments here in downtown."

Approximately 17% of restaurants fail within the first year, according to a study by statisticians at the University of California, Berkeley. This rate is lower than the average first-year failure rate of all other service businesses, which is 39%. The study found that restaurants have a median lifetime of approximately four and a half years.

While all of the competition in such a small area can be a factor in restaurant turnover, some restaurant owners view the high volume as a motivator to improve their businesses. Gregor Brous, co-owner of Collegetown Bagels — which moved locations from North Aurora Street to City Centre on East State Street — said that over the past 40 years, he has seen a shift from being the only restaurant on the block to sharing dozens of other restaurants in the surrounding area.

"The competition is healthy," he said. "I think it inspires people to be creative. It inspires people to look at themselves and ask what they're doing because we do need to change with time. We need to address trends and address customer demands, and I think we're more pushed to do that and to be conscious of it when there's other people all around the street trying different things.

National chains, which are mainly located outside the downtown area, provide additional competition. Brous said that on Elmira Road, the chains, like Panera Bread and Chipotle, draw customers away from the local and independent restaurants because they often have cheaper menus, better branding and more parking spots.

So far, the restaurant closures this year included Bol, a ramen and pho restaurant opened by Richard Avery and Dean Xeros, the owners of Simeon’s American Bistro, and Nikki Green, a health food restaurant. Lucky Falkenberg, former owner of Nikki Green, made the announcement that the restaurant was closing due to precarious finances and the manager and assistant manager leaving.

Ferguson said he thinks rents reflect the economic reality of the area. For instance, a space on the main strip of The Commons may be more expensive than a space down a side street, but the former has higher foot traffic.

He said that rents on the high end of the spectrum are approximately $50 per square foot, and the low end is approximately $15 per square foot.

He said he anticipates the space where Collegetown Bagels used to be — a corner on North Aurora Street — may take longer to fill because it is a more expensive space and there is a limited number of businesses that will prosper there.

"In downtown, we have a variety of rent locations ranging from some of the highest, some of the lowest," Ferguson said. "So I think there’s opportunity for people, it’s just a matter of picking wisely and sort of making sure you fit in where you are.

Brous said that in order to compensate for the larger space and higher rent — the previous location was 1,500 square feet, and the new location has 2,300 square feet — Collegetown Bagels is planning to introduce alcohol selections and later hours.

Oulida owned and co-owned restaurants on the main strip on The Commons, including pizzerias Casa Blanca and Due Amici.

He said that in addition to the expensive rent, he sold these establishments because of the construction that has been occurring downtown.

"We had to shut down sometimes for weeks," he said. "We don't make any more profit, so that's when I was thinking, 'Oh this it. Sell it. I don't want to take the risk.'

Ferguson said the DIA tries to encourage individuals looking to open new restaurants to fill a niche and offer a type of food that is short in demand.

"Sometimes that, for instance, there is a lack of steakhouses or soup and salad locations downtown.

The DIA also offers technical assistance and marketing, including incorporating restaurateurs in food-centric events, like the annual Chowder Cook-Off in December.

"Sometimes it comes down to how well somebody is going to run their business," he said. "How smart and savvy they are in marketing and reaching out to people, particularly young people and students. There's a trick to doing that. If you're good at doing that, you're going to do better."

Viva Taqueria

4.5/5

On a taco Tuesday, Viva Taqueria and Cantina was packed with hungry customers craving delectable Mexican food. The wait for a table was approximately 15 minutes, but once seated, the server was prompt in taking orders. For only $9, the super nachos fed a table of five as an appetizer. The crispy chips and cheese were topped with jalapenos, guacamole, sour cream, refried beans and pico de gallo.

Viva offers many entree dishes like fajitas, enchiladas and tacos ranging from $11 to $17. It was hard to choose from the appealing menu, but we opted for barbacoa tacos and beef enchiladas. The beef was tender and the cheese was stringy as we expected.

The Commons Kitchen

4.5/5

The walls of The Commons Kitchen are colorful and rugs. There is a corner by the counter with overflowing with colorful Western African art. There is a fajita quesadilla for $14. The price of the dish was a little pricey for the smaller portion size. An order of chicken makhani, rice and naan bread was approximately $16. However, the quality of the food was very good. We ordered the mini portion size. An little longer than it normally should have to come out considering there were only a few other tables.

New Delhi Diamond’s

3.5/5

New Delhi Diamond’s is an Indian restaurant on Green Street that greets its customers with friendly faces and the smell of delicious food. On a weekend night, the waitress was rushing and sprinting from table to table. The food was rich and very well seasoned. However, it was a little pricey for the smaller portion size.
The Ithacan editors’ goal for this food insert was to explore the abundance of restaurants and cafes around Ithaca. We got to go into the kitchens and behind the scenes at Viva Taqueria & Cantina, Za-Za’s Cucina, Coltivare, AGAVA and The Boatyard Grill to learn what chefs do on a daily basis. We saw fire and ice, knives and ladles and everything else that goes into making the dining experience perfect for that first bite or sip.

Rashad Edwards, executive chef at The Boatyard Grill makes a white wine sauce to pair with monkfish.

JILL RUTHAUSER/THE ITHACAN

Viva Taqueria bartender Josh Lambert is ready to serve a margarita, one of the many tequila-based drinks offered at the bar along with beer and wine.

NICK BAHAMONDE/THE ITHACAN

Viva Taqueria server Niki House reaches for plates of food from the kitchen.

NICK BAHAMONDE/THE ITHACAN

Curtis Radcliffe, head chef and owner of Za-Za’s Cucina, prepares veal osso bucco Oct. 23. Veal osso bucco is made of portions of veal braised with vegetables, white wine and broth.

MOLLY BAILOT/THE ITHACAN

Prepping for a night of Coltivare’s flatbread orders, line cook Cristiane de Toffoli forms individual portions of dough.

KRISTEN HARRISON/THE ITHACAN

Viva Taqueria bartender Josh Lambert is ready to serve a margarita, one of the many tequila-based drinks offered at the bar along with beer and wine.

NICK BAHAMONDE/THE ITHACAN

Rashad Edwards, executive chef at The Boatyard Grill makes a white wine sauce to pair with monkfish.

ZULY RUTHAUSER/THE ITHACAN
Local cheddar and mozzarella cheeses cook on a flatbread at Coltivare, a farm-to-table culinary center and restaurant.

KRISTEN HARRISON/THE ITHACAN

Line cook Benny Janowsky tops a salmon dish off with avocado tomatillo salsa at AGAVA.

LIAM CONWAY/THE ITHACAN

Curtis Radcliffe, head chef and owner of Zaza’s Cucina, cooks for the dinner rush. The kitchen overlooks the main dining room.

MOLLY BAILOT/THE ITHACAN

AGAVA’s chupacabra flatbread features house-cured bacon, crimini, garlic, mozzarella and tomatoes.

LIAM CONWAY/THE ITHACAN

Curtis Radcliffe, head chef and owner of Zaza’s Cucina, prepares veal osso buco Oct. 23. Veal osso buco is made of portions of veal braised with vegetables, white wine and broth.

MOLLY BAILOT/THE ITHACAN

The Boatyard Grill, an American-style restaurant on the Cayuga Inlet, offers an array of seafood dishes, several that pair well with seasoned potatoes.

JILL RUTHAUSER/THE ITHACAN

Prepping for a night of Coltivare’s flatbread orders, line cook Cristiane de Toffoli forms individual portions of dough.

KRISTEN HARRISON/THE ITHACAN
and comfort food
Luna combines fun and comfort food

BY ELEANOR KAY

Luna Inspired Street Food on The Commons is a great place to grab a bite to eat with friends. Luna, located on Aurora Street, has been on The Commons for approximately two and a half years and has another location in Collegetown.

Something that sets it apart from other restaurants on The Commons is its style of food and approach to dining. The restaurant has a more casual atmosphere, with a garage door–like entrance that makes customers feel like they are in a food truck rather than a restaurant.

The restaurant has a variety of food on its menu, ranging from tacos to pizza. Everything is made to order, so the wait for a waffle can be long during the restaurant’s popular times, and it can take up to 45 minutes until you can cut into a waffle topped with eggs and bacon.

There are just enough eggs to fully cover the waffle and the bacon is perfectly crisp. A single waffle costs $8, with a double costing $10. Pair a cup of hot chocolate with a savory waffle to be completely satisfied. For coffee drinkers, the coffee is not out of the ordinary in its taste. It has some fruity notes, but it is not outstanding.

Each of the waffles is served with a side of cool coleslaw also complements the tangy barbecue sauce. The cool coleslaw also complements the warmth of the braised short rib, creating the perfect grilled cheese sandwich. Some of its other popular dishes are the Cuban Street Plate and the shrimp bowl.

The pricing of the dishes at Luna is a little bit expensive for the area and the style of food. It’s not the type of place someone would go for a quick lunch break but rather for a birthday celebration. The grilled cheese sandwich came to approximately $15 including tax. It was large, but, for a college student on a budget, it’s a little on the pricey side for a sandwich. Some other dishes offered are the Taco Salad for $12 and the Maple Bourbon Bacon Bowl for $13.

Luna is a great place to go for seriously delicious comfort food and great service. It’s modern and laid-back, which is perfect for customers that are looking for something stronger but a delightful nonetheless.

CAFFEINE FIX: REVIEW OF SELECT DRINKS

BY ARLEIGH RODGERS

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Ithaca Coffee Company: Cold Brew (Kyojo Style) $3.25 (small), $3.75 (medium), $4.25 (large)

Ithaca Coffee Company’s cold brew shines through its silky texture. But for what tastes fairly similar to a less expensive iced coffee, the brew’s hope of additional caffeine is not worth the price.

Collegetown Bagels: Almond Joy Latte $6.75 (one size)

This iced drink is light in color and heavy in saccharine syrup. While coffee may be a listed ingredient, it disappears behind the chocolate, milk, and sugar — a detriment to those looking for something stronger but a delight nonetheless.

Collegetown Bagels: Taurus $9.75 (one size)

The Taurus is enriched with hazelnut and vanilla. When velvety milk and espresso meet these flavors, the drink comes off as deliciously uniform. The double shot paid for disappears into the candied syrups.

Ithaca Coffee Company: Cafe Au Lait $8.90 (one size)

Light frosted milk means Ithaca Coffee Company’s richly brewed Nuto coffee. The blend issues a delicate but reliable tang.

Ithaca Coffee Company: Cold Brew $5.75 (one size)

This iced drink is light in color and heavy in saccharine syrup. While coffee may be a listed ingredient, it disappears behind the chocolate, milk, and sugar — a detriment to those looking for something stronger but a delight nonetheless.

Gimmel Coffee: Latte 3% (medium), $4.25 (large)

When compared to Ithaca Bakery’s specialty drinks, a latte is perhaps the most diverse offering on Gimmel Coffee’s menu. However, the near-perfect drink needs no embellishments to shine. It is carried by its rich espresso and contrasting airy milk.

Ithaca Bakery: Jeff’s Java Jolt $6.75 (one size)

Sweet cocoa powder meets four shots of espresso in Jeff’s Java Jolt. Best brewed hot, this quasi-hot chocolate leaves no embellishments to shine. It is carried by its rich espresso and contrasting airy milk.

Caffe Au Lait

Luna is combining fun and comfort food in a food truck rather than a restaurant. Luna has a good choice if you go out with a large group that wants a little bit of everything.

The creaminess of the ‘n cheese complements the tangy barbecue sauce. The cool coleslaw also complements the warmth of the braised short rib, creating the perfect grilled cheese sandwich. Some of its other popular dishes are the Cuban Street Plate and the shrimp bowl.

The pricing of the dishes at Luna is a little bit expensive for the area and the style of food. It’s not the type of place someone would go for a quick lunch break but rather for a birthday celebration. The grilled cheese sandwich came to approximately $15 including tax. It was large, but, for a college student on a budget, it’s a little on the pricey side for a sandwich. Some other dishes offered are the Taco Salad for $12 and the Maple Bourbon Bacon Bowl for $13.

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LUNA COMBINES FUN AND COMFORT FOOD

BY ASHLEY STALNECKER

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When walking on The Commons midmorning on a Saturday, it is not uncommon to see a long line weaving its way out from one of the most popular breakfast locations in Ithaca—Waffle Frolic.

For nine years, the restaurant has offered a variety of sweet and savory waffle combinations. Even better, the restaurant was founded by two Ithaca College alumni, so it has a strong tie to the college. Waffle Frolic is open from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on weekends and from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekdays.

Although it is a bit pricey for breakfast, and the wait can be long, the second that the perfect mix of toppings and waffle hits the taste buds, all else is forgotten. The food is great, but, because of the price, Waffle Frolic is more of a treat than a weekly destination.

If you tend to be more of a sweet person, Mr. Popular should be your first choice. Mr. Popular is a waffle detailed with Nutella, covered with strawberries and topped with whipped cream. A single Mr. Popular waffle is $7.50, and a double is $10.

The waffles are substantial enough to withstand a plethora of toppings and soft enough to melt in the mouth. For others, the right choice might be a savory waffle, like the restaurant’s signature Fried Chicken and Waffles.

The Elvis is an option for peanut butter lovers. The waffle is topped with real peanut butter and an added fried banana, which makes it perfect for a mouthwatering combination. The peanut butter caramelizes the banana to make for a quality topping. Although the whipped cream on top is most likely from a can, it has just the right amount of sweetness.

Be careful with portions. A single waffle can be just right, but the double waffle should be reserved to quench an unreasonable hunger. Waffle Frolic definitely does not skimp on the portions.

The restaurant recently adopted a new system for notifying customers that their orders can be reserved to quench an unreasonable hunger. Be careful with portions. A single waffle can be just right, but the double waffle should be reserved to quench an unreasonable hunger. Waffle Frolic definitely does not skimp on the portions.

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Along with having a large selection of beers on tap and specialty cocktails, The Westy offers a fun atmosphere with a popcorn machine and a pool table. The bartender recommended the Double Dragon. The drink mixes fresh squeezed lime, grapefruit juice, cranberry juice, tequila and elderflower.

Known for having live music most nights of the week, The Range offers a lively drinking experience. The bartender recommended keeping it classic with a glass of Jameson Irish Whiskey. The bar normally has a cover charge when there is live music, so anticipate paying at least $5 at the door.

The Bartender Recommends

1. Silky Jones
With its large dance floor and live DJs, Silky Jones, located on The Commons, is the place to go for a party. The bartender recommended starting the night with tequila shots. No tequila shot is complete without the quintessential lime and salt, so make sure to request them.

2. The Range
Known for having live music most nights of the week, The Range offers a lively drinking experience. The bartender recommended keeping it classic with a glass of Jameson Irish Whiskey. The bar normally has a cover charge when there is live music, so anticipate paying at least $5 at the door.

3. Pete’s Cayuga Bar
Keep it classic at Pete’s Cayuga Bar with a Labatt Blue on tap. Pete’s is a classic bar that offers a no-frills drinking experience. With wooden booths in the front of the bar and a pool table in the back, there is plenty of room to hang out with friends. The bartender recommends keeping the rounds coming at Pete’s.

4. The Watershed
The Watershed is known for its creative cocktails and classy atmosphere. The bartender recommended a Mezcal Old-Fashioned, which is not officially on the menu. Ingredients include Mezcal, simple syrup, water, orange and lemon essential oils, Angostura bitters and a cherry marinated in vanilla.

5. The Westy
Along with having a large selection of beers on tap and specialty cocktails, The Westy offers a fun atmosphere with a popcorn machine and a pool table. The bartender recommended the Double Dragon. The drink mixes fresh squeezed lime, grapefruit juice, cranberry juice, tequila and elderflower.
A FULL DAY OF EATING IN ITHACA

BY SOPHIA ADAMUCCI
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9:30 A.M.
The best breakfast in Ithaca is served at Carriage House Cafe in Collegetown. The cafe draws its name from the renovated stone carriage house it calls home. If you are in the mood for a savory breakfast, order the sconewich, which includes fluffy eggs and cheddar on a homemade ham, cheddar and scallion scone. If you want something sweet, the brie French toast is a confection of creme brie, berry coulis and maple syrup that melts in your mouth. Make sure to get there before 10 a.m. or the wait for a table hovers around 45 minutes. If you do get stuck with a wait, order a cup of coffee at the bar and a homemade scone out of the bakery case to tide you over.

NOON
Located in the Dewitt Mall, Cafe DeWitt has a lunch menu filled with tasty sandwiches and salads made with quirky ingredients. Sit in the dining room, which is lined with a fish tank inhabited by goldfish, and read the small but diverse lunch menu. The Michel sandwich is a spin on the classic BLT but instead uses bacon, baby spinach and cranberry chutney. For vegetarians, the Sofia sandwich has white bean and garlic hummus, carrot-apricot chutney and almonds. The salads are equally delicious, like the Terra, which has avocado, hard-boiled eggs and pickled beets among its ingredients.

3 P.M.
Need an afternoon caffeine pick-me-up? Head over to Press Cafe. Located off The Commons in Press Bay Alley, Press Cafe offers a small and relaxed atmosphere to enjoy a cup of coffee. Prioritizing quality coffee and espresso beans over specialty drinks, the menu is small and has all the classics. Order a latte, Americano or cold brew, and settle in. The tables are small, so it is best to go with that one friend you’ve been meaning to catch up with for months. And yes, there is oat milk.

7:30 P.M.
Saigon Kitchen, located on West State Street, offers Vietnamese food in a cozy and casual environment. The menu is full of traditional pho, which is especially yummy in the colder months. The portions are big and leave you feeling full and warm. The Spicy Saigon Soup is perfect if you have that cold that seems to be going around. There are also many options for vegetarians, including tofu and vegetables served over steamed rice. Saigon Kitchen does not take reservations, so get there early to avoid standing in a line that goes out the door.

9:30 P.M.
Finish — or start — your night with a nightcap at The Watershed. Located directly off The Commons, the bar is spacious and classy but still offers a laid-back atmosphere. Talk to your friends or strangers over original specialty cocktails, like a Purple G & T, with gin, tonic and apple-beet shrub, or a Blackberry Bourbon, with bourbon, limonata and cassis. The menu also boasts a full hot tea selection that can be ordered by the cup or pot. If you can’t choose between alcohol or tea, order a hot toddy and get the best of both. There is also a small plates menu and cookies that come in unique flavors, like salted caramel and lemon ginger.

MIDNIGHT
Open until 2 a.m., Sammy’s is the quintessential stop for late-night grub. Situated on The Commons, it is centrally located from the majority of bars downtown. Sammy’s has a variety of pizza pies in its case at once, so satisfy your munchies with a slice of classic cheese or spicy Buffalo chicken. There are sticky tables and booths in the back to devour pizza or garlic knots. There is nothing showy about Sammy’s, but that is exactly what you need at midnight.