

# La Lou Crepes

A culinary adventure close to home



Leslie Klipsch

The Classic French crepe — orange, caramel, sweet ricotta and granola topping — from La Lou Crepes.

*Each month in *The Gold Standard*, Leslie Klipsch, a freelance writer and editor based in Davenport, will shine a spotlight on the gems of the Quad-Cities area — the unique people, businesses and trends — for Gold Book readers. She enjoys reading, cooking, spending time with her husband and their three young children, and exploring all that the Quad-Cities has to offer.*

BY LESLIE KLIPSCH

Once spent a dreamy week in Paris, where I managed to convince everyone I was traveling with that eating a crepe just before turning in for the evening was something of a mandatory cultural indulgence. In front of a tiny sidewalk take-away stand on Rue Cler, we enjoyed rich chocolate with sliced bananas, sweet strawberry jam with lush cr me, and deceptively decadent sugar and butter, all wrapped up in a warm crepe.

Needless to say, enjoying a half dozen crepes in the crepe capital of the world set my expectations rather high. Back in the Quad-Cities, one bite of creamy Nutella with a deep red and subtly sweet raspberry sauce folded into a La Lou crepe on a Sunday morning fulfills my memory and satisfies my hunger for culinary adventure closer to home.

Chad Cushman is the tall and talented Quad-Citian behind La Lou Crepes.

He debuted his crepes at the Freight House Farmers' Market in Davenport in 2009 when what began as a creative fundraising venture took on a life of its own for the seasoned chef, who has spent time at notable area dining destinations such as The Faithful Pilot, Farradays' and the Davenport Country Club. Invigorated by his success at the market and determined to bring something unique and delicious to culinary-minded Quad-Citians, Chef Cushman continues to perfect his playful creations and hone his niche as a pop-up restaurant of sorts, serving sweet and savory crepes to delighted eaters all over town.

Without a storefront restaurant to manage, Chef Cushman uses temporary work spaces to showcase his talent. Walk through the doors of Dunn Bros Coffee in Bettendorf on Sunday mornings, and you'll see Chef Cushman with his traditional cast-iron French crepe pan and mounds of fresh ingredients set up along the gorgeous wood table in the back of the shop. Stroll through the Freight House Farmers' Market in Davenport on Saturday mornings, and you'll find him serving crepes to smitten customers alfresco.

Chef Cushman also cooks at kitchen counters in private homes whose foodie-bent inhabitants have something to celebrate. He envisions catering everything from wedding receptions to corporate brunches and beyond, recognizing that La Lou Crepes is uniquely appealing to a community with an increasingly sophisticated palate.

"Concentrating on crepes gives me an

opportunity to do something different. I see it as a strong niche. Plus, I like the challenge. Doing something not commonly done thrills me," he enthuses.

Chef Cushman creates new sweet and savory crepe fillings each week, leaving regular customers guessing what flavor they'll experience next. He often riffs on recipes he reads in classic cookbooks. A simple soup or standard dessert might turn into a complex, multilayered crepe.

"I love the versatility of crepes and what can go into them," he says. "Plus, it's something that you just don't see that much around here. Crepes are different, and people seek me out because they enjoy experiencing something different."

And that's precisely what this new



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Chad Cushman of La Lou Crepes.

column for the Gold Book is all about. It's a celebration of fabulous finds here in the Quad-Cities. Though it's wonderful to be able to travel to exciting new places and gather interesting experiences, sometimes — as is the case with La Lou Crepes — we can discover pleasure, creativity and a taste for excitement right in our own backyard.

• **My favorites:** One bite of Chef Cushman's caramelized apple crepe served with a cloud of sweet, velvety whipped ricotta and adorned with a crunchy granola topping made me a believer. I've also enjoyed braised pork with rich goat cheese crème and smooth apple butter, topped with a tangy vinaigrette slaw. Because you can't go wrong with Chef Cushman's sweet or savory creations, my husband and I typically purchase one of each and do our best to politely share.

• **Chef Cushman's favorite:** He claims there is both "genius and madness" in coming up with his own original recipes week after week, and he keeps a little black notebook in which he scrawls inspiration whenever it hits him. His favorite creation thus far? Braised chicken thigh with Gouda crème sauce and avocado pureed with ancho chili peppers, served with roasted corn and black bean salad, and garnished with raspberry-infused sriracha. "This particular crepe filling is both sweet and spicy. It has layers and layers of flavor," he says wistfully.

• **Why you should go:** If you're a Quad-Citizen who appreciates a little culinary creativity, La Lou Crepes is worth



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A crepe featuring braised pork, goat cheese cream and apple butter vinaigrette slaw.

tracking down and experiencing. Chef Cushman's specialty crepes stretch beyond the typical brunch fare, delighting diners with both a lovely plated presentation and an undeniable taste.

• **When you should go:** Dunn Bros Coffee, 787 Middle Road, Bettendorf, perks up on Sunday mornings when Chef Cushman settles into the back of the shop. From 9 a.m. until 1 p.m., lucky patrons enjoy sweet or savory crepes paired with fresh coffee roasted on site. Or you can catch Chef Cushman from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturdays at the Freight House Farmers' Market, 421 W. River Drive, Davenport, on the patio south of the Freight House. La Lou Crepes also caters, creating a buzz-worthy and delicious addition to any gathering. Call (563) 579-6599 to invite him to pop up at your next party.

