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## Patisserie Lenox brings European macarons to Northampton



Macarons at Patisserie Lenox in Northampton draw attention to themselves with their dazzling colors. GAZETTE STAFF/Lisa Spear [Buy this image](#)

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By LISA SPEAR

*Editor's note: In this monthly column writer Lisa Spear indulges her sweet tooth by sampling desserts made at area restaurants.*

A classic European pastry, macarons have boomed in popularity in cities throughout the United States over the last few years. In December, the trend arrived in Northampton when French pastry chef Jean Yves brought his café Patisserie Lenox, based in the Berkshires, to Main Street.

Macarons, small enough to fit in the palm of your hand, look like tiny ice cream sandwiches. The light, chewy cookie shells, made with almond flour, encompass flavored butter cream filling made with mostly white chocolate. The added flavors are all natural extracts imported from Germany. There are lemon, cranberry, pistachio and lavender flavors. There is chocolate, too, of course, and my personal favorite, the coffee macaron. Around the holidays Patisserie Lenox rolls out an eggnog macaron.

If you walk into Patisserie Lenox, you will find brightly colored rows of these creations in a display case near the register. They are surrounded by rows and rows of other pastries, like fruit tarts, flourless chocolate cake and croissants.

But the colorful macarons demand attention. The lemon ones are neon yellow, the cranberry ones, ruby red and the pistachio, lime green. The dazzling hue comes from food coloring, but it's an appropriate warning for the intense flavor you'll encounter when you take a bite. The tang from the natural lemon extract, for example, jolts your taste buds awake — in a good way. They are delicious.

"I do put a little more than I should," Yves says of the flavoring.

These cookies, he adds, are more about know-how than any traditional recipe. His version has emerged from years of experience, trial and error.

In addition to its pastries, Patisserie Lenox serves simple lunch dishes, all made from scratch. The menu is filled with French classics, like the beet and goat cheese salad and the ham and Swiss cheese croissant.

Yves says he keeps his dishes simple, using just a few ingredients in each. It's an art, he says, he learned over a lifetime in kitchens around the world.

Yves, 64, says he started his career as a young man in cafés in Paris and worked his way up, eventually moving to New York and opening his own cafe on Long Island. Eventually, he expanded into the Berkshires in Massachusetts, and, now, Northampton.

Yves says the macarons are one of the best sellers in his shops. They cost \$2.41 each; a box of six sells for \$13.50, 12 for \$25.

Two dozen flavors cycle through his display cases, which must be replenished at least once a day, he says. Given the demand at his four restaurants, Yves bakes 2,000 to 3,000 macarons every week. During the summer months, he says, the number nearly doubles.

"People try them everywhere — they try macarons in Europe, in France and they come back here and they say these are the best," he says.

"It's just almond flour, sugar and egg. It's very good for you. You should eat two a day," he says laughing.

If he means good for your soul, I concur.