

The Fly Trap



Fried rice with veggies, tofu, red chiles, soy, ginger and sesame. (MT Photo: Rob Widdis)

The Fly Trap
22950 Woodward Ave.
Ferndale, MI

248-399-5150

Price: Inexpensive

Here's a 'Fly' we want open

by [Elissa Karg](#)
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The neon sign above the door really does say “The Fly Trap” (and in smaller letters “a finer diner”). The menu proclaims that eggs come with toast and potatoes “when logical.” Someone is having fun here — why not be a part of it?

Chef Gaven McMillian (formerly of Fiddleheads) and his partners Kara and Sean McClanaghan bought the tiny space that’s been home to a diner since 1932. They wanted to preserve the concept of diner food, but with a twist that’s both playful and sophisticated. You can get a burger and fries, or bacon and eggs, but after that the menu goes in all sorts of interesting directions.

One sandwich is called the Pea Patch — grilled eggplant, shiitake mushrooms, red onions, tomatoes and provolone on whole-grain bread; all of these flavors are brought together with a “schmear” of pesto which, in addition to herbs, nuts and olive oil, gets a deeper flavor from roasted poblano peppers.

Another terrific sandwich is the *charmoula* chicken, named for the staple Moroccan sauce more commonly used on fish. Here, the exotically spiced chicken breast is combined with jack cheese and caramelized onions on grilled sourdough.

This is one restaurant where vegetarians have as interesting a selection as carnivores. Of the seven dinner entrées, only one contains meat, another is fish, and one has a choice of pork, chicken or tofu. The rest are vegetarian or vegan.

Macaroni with three cheeses is a distant cousin to the common version. Chef McMillian’s has to be served in a bowl, because the white sauce is runny. The combination of white cheddar, smoked Gouda and blue cheese is savory and complex without being too far out there. But you probably shouldn’t order it for a child.

Pho, that staple soup of Vietnamese cuisine, begins with a broth flavored with lemongrass and Thai chiles. But you may never get to the broth because the bowl is filled to the brim with crisp vegetables (such as baby bok choy, broccoli, carrots, etc.) plus your choice of chicken, pork or tofu. Long, flat noodles float among the veggies. Chopsticks are brought with the *pho*, but some

will prefer a fork and spoon.

The polenta incorporates smoked Gouda for flavor and texture. It's served with a spicy sausage made for the restaurant at Royal Oak's Holiday Market and is practically fat-free. These interesting flavors are set off by a mélange of grilled sweet peppers and onions in balsamic vinegar.

The spinach salad serves to remind how very easy it is to make something that's both green and interesting. Baby spinach leaves are coated with a biting vinaigrette and topped with an assortment of toasted nuts and seeds — I identified pumpkin, sesame and sunflower seeds, along with almonds, walnuts and pine nuts. Chunks of creamy chèvre notch it up some more. The chop-chop salad is another interesting take, this one with an Italian theme: Ham, salami and provolone are chopped with sturdy greens, mushrooms and black olives.

Inside, the Fly Trap is set up like a railroad car, with a line of tables and chairs on one side and booths and a counter on the other. There's an element of industrial chic — note the pipes that are used to hold up the partition in the entryway — but there are plenty of warm and whimsical touches. The lamps that hang over the tables are each different. Made of glass in a variety of shapes including tulips, squares and half-circles, they glimmer jewel-like in colors of cobalt, orange and more. The deep colors of the walls — bright red on one side and blue on the other — evoke the current patriotic frenzy, but in a way that seems almost mocking. It's cornflower blue, not navy.

When I first called to check out what kind of place this was, I had to ask about the name. “Flies aren't something you want to associate with food,” I began. “Well, neither are rattlesnakes,” said the voice at the other end. As it turns out, a lot of people complain about the name, but they keep coming back. “We have regulars already,” McMillian says. “People like to hang out here.”

Open for not quite two months, there are still a few kinks to work out. I asked about the “house-made daily treat” and our server said it wasn't available. “Out already?” I asked. Well, no, just hadn't gotten to it that day. They did manage some tempting chalkboard specials, including an entrée of mussels, and a fantastic tortilla soup that seemed to capture the essence of Mexican cooking.

Open 7:30 a.m.-10 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, and 7:30 a.m.-9 p.m. Sunday. No booze.