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Food

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Off The Beaten Path

March 03, 2010

Step a bit off the beaten path and find the café/caterers named: **The Fruited Plain** (www.thefruitedplain.com). The restaurant is in **Parsippany**, the take-out/catering shop is in **Pine Brook**.



This seven year-old shop is a bit hard to find, set your GPS for this welcoming well lit space, brimming with gourmet to go. Both fresh and frozen delicacies prepared for your holiday and everyday table, plus soups, desserts and savory and sweet, toothsome treats.

A refrigerated case is filled with amazing salads. One which I love is Edemame and Quinoa with a light soy, sesame dressing. Other favorites include batons of deeply flavorful beets in a vinaigrette and a lightly seasoned curried chicken salad. Their bread from a NYC is just crusty enough to support such a salad.

Gourmet to go for the busy parent makes things so easy. Of extra interest were the frozen appetizers: chicken quesadillas were only the beginning with Quiche Lorraine, Beef Satay, Clams Oreganato, Turkey Meatloaf, Mini Cuban Sandwiches, and baby Mac and Cheese Tartlet's, I could eat an entire box of those little treats.

The soups are a wonder with all stocks made in house from scratch.

Owners **Drew** and **Rosemary Gabbe** met each other while working in some of the world's finest kitchens both in NYC and abroad.

Rosemary does the cooking with a light hand and a smile. Favorites they presented me for a sample included the **Mac and cheese** tartlettes, a perfect finger sized **crab cake**-more crab than filler with only a tiny bit of breadcrumbs to hold the sweet meat together, the **Artichoke Croustini**, a grown up version of the perennial favorite of spinach and artichoke dip-transformed into a treat for the palate-why didn't I bring a bottle of wine?

Mini cookies by the plateful, a cowboy cookie was outstanding, mini chocolate chips studded sweet and crispy. A cardamom cookie, dense with butter with a crunchy crust-sprinkled with powdered sugar! A delight!

I'm going back for a big bowl of their Onion Soup. You can bet that this is delicious. The thought of melted onions, bread, great stock and molten cheese on a cold rainy day warms me deeply!

The **Fruited Plain Café** is located at 959 Route 46 East in **Parsippany**. They are open in this location from 7:30 am to 2:30 pm. Phone: 973-299-0199

Their café and catering operation with all the treats necessary for a dinner party to a wedding is located at 48 Stiles Lane in **Pine Brook**, NJ Phone: 973-808-8862

So is it Parsippany or Pine Brook? You decide. The Parsippany location is light café fare with sandwiches, salads and quick bites. The Pine Brook location is a joy! It's definitely worth the trip off the beaten path.

NJ My Way food writer **Warren Bobrow** was raised on a farm in Morristown. His column on food, wine and life, **Wild Table** (www.wildriverreview.com/wildtable) appears daily in the online magazine, **Wild River Review**. (www.wildriverreview.com)