

-Restaurant review-



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The Bread 'N Board Cafe at 742 Ninth St. in Durham

DTH/Charlotte Cannon

Bread 'N Board: culture and food

By **KATHY PETERS**
Staff Writer

Frenchman Jean Claude Lacroix has been living in America for nearly two decades now, but it's only in the last 2½ years that he has brought Durham one of its most unique eating and entertainment experiences.

Lacroix is the owner and manager of The Bread and Board Cafe, where the specialties include both nourishment and food for thought.

The Cafe is tucked away in its own nook at 742 Ninth St. in Durham, past Wellspring Grocery and Fields Laundromat. The friendly little bistro is about a 30-minute trip from Chapel Hill, but the journey itself is a ride way back to the 60s, back to folk singers and tie-dye and easy-going attitudes. And food, of course. It has "food for the belly, and something else," as Lacroix says.

The humble facade is something you'd have to know about to notice. A corkboard as full of notices and cultural posters as the Student Union's greets your eyes as you open the door preceding the Cafe's cozy room that probably could seat about 40 people on a good night.

The Cafe is perhaps best known for its Monday night readings, sponsored by the N.C. Writers Network. The first Monday of each month, two or three writers perform their works and then the audience participates in an open reading. Wednesday nights, the microphone is open. Anyone who wants to have 45 minutes in the spotlight signs up before 6:30 p.m. on Wednesdays or calls the Cafe. Open-mike nights attract mainly singers, Lacroix says.

For those who would rather eat than ham it up, the Cafe's menu is posted on blackboards by the kitchen, where Lacroix or one of his workers stands in brightly colored patterned caps taking lunch or dinner orders.

Although the Cafe is mainly a sandwich shop, salads and stuffed potatoes of all kinds aren't sparse on the menu. The fare is inexpensive; all sandwiches range from about \$2.95 to \$3.95. The Cafe also offers some hard-to-find items, like brie on bread or hot cider with cinnamon. And lots of munchies.

The Cafe's most popular offerings are avocado and cheese sandwiches and soup. (except on Friday and

Saturday nights, when beer is THE beverage of choice).

The food is average, but the atmosphere is a rarity. Fridays and Saturdays, Lacroix hosts musicians of all types — rock, folk, calypso, the blues. In the last year many groups have made Bread and Board their stage, including Yusuf and Brown, Southern Culture on the Skids and folk guitarist Gregory Paul, who sings in nine languages. There is no cover charge, but Lacroix asks for a donation of \$2 on Fridays and Saturdays.

Does the Cafe cater mainly to students? Not necessarily, Lacroix says. During the day, working office people, Duke students and local residents make up most of his clientele. Nighttime brings mostly Duke students to the Cafe.

But no matter when one takes the trip to the Bread and Board Cafe, its laid-back atmosphere is enveloping. When you're eating minestrone soup and an avocado and cheese sandwich with plastic utensils and enjoying it, something's either incredibly wrong or incredibly right. Maybe it's the calypso music that floats around sometimes on Friday nights.

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