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The Root debuts a Sunday brunch with attitude and gutsy flavors

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By **Sylvia Rector**

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Restaurant Critic

When executive chef James Rigato announced recently that the award-winning Root Restaurant & Bar would introduce Sunday brunch, he said he planned to make it one he would enjoy if he were the customer.

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That probably explains why the servers wear T-shirts from epic bands and the menu is filled with gutsy, indulgent, full-flavored dishes.

“I wanted to make it, like, a rock ‘n’ roll hangover brunch,” the chef said Sunday, on the second week of service. “We wanted to loosen things up and have fun — appeal to a little younger crowd.”

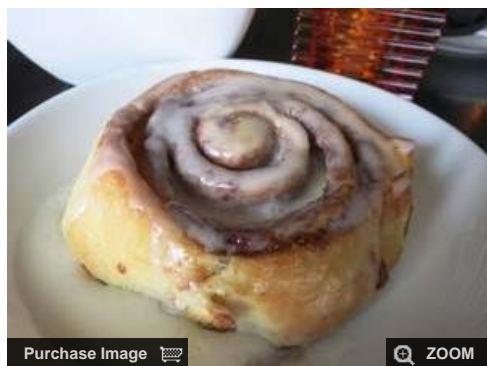
It's definitely a menu with attitude — but executed with the White Lake Township restaurant's style and high standards for ingredients and preparation.

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House-cured salmon lox with scallion-laced Lily cream cheese and grilled garlic bread at the Root.



The fresh cinnamon buns ooze with warm vanilla bean icing at the Root's brunch. / Sylvia Rector/Detroit Free Press

Dishes not to miss include classic fried chicken and waffles (\$16), prepared with tender, juicy, boneless chicken breasts in a dark brown, harissa-spiced crust. What sets it apart is the combination of maple syrup and house-made hot sauce guests add to their own taste at the table. Don't wimp out on the hot sauce, or you'll miss the spicy-sweet excitement of it all. Rigato calls the hot sauce chupacabra, the name of a mythical creature believed to kill small animals by sucking their blood.

Other standouts are the rich, velvety house-cured salmon lox (\$15) served with scallion-laced Lily cream cheese, accompanied by grilled garlic bread — my favorite dish on the menu — and the big, fluffy cinnamon buns (\$4 each) oozing with warm, sweet, vanilla bean icing. The lemon ricotta pancakes (\$8) with maple syrup and/or house-made preserves also are delicious, especially with a side of house-made bacon (\$4).

■ **Photo gallery:** [The Root debuts brunch](#) | [Mobile users tap here](#)

Pastrami hash (\$12) — with fried fingerlings, roasted poblanos and onions, topped with two fried eggs and a mantle of whole-grain hollandaise — is a true hangover dish; order it only if you're up for something extra-hearty.

Or try the biscuit-and-gravy cure: A tall, flaky buttermilk biscuit drowned in not-too-spicy chorizo gravy is just \$5; two of them would be an entire meal.

Other dishes range from steak and eggs (New York strip, \$27; rib eye, \$29) featuring naturally raised Michigan grass-fed beef and fried fingerlings with house sauerkraut and garlic, to the very popular vegan burrito (\$8), stuffed with tofu scramble, roasted

mushrooms and vegetables with tomatoes and fried fingerlings — plus that fabulous hot sauce.

Wearing a rock band T-shirt from some group like Nirvana, the Stones or the Grateful Dead on Sundays is not required but is completely appropriate. A word to the wise, though: Rigato let the staff choose their own T-shirts, but he did reject one possibility — Britney Spears. (To be safe, you might also avoid the Bieber.)

Brunch hours are 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Sundays; reservations are accepted.

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