

Market + Savvy



By Jacalyn Carfagno | Photos by Lee Thomas

Food Impresario Pleases Local Palates

Krim Boughalem is not interested in trendy food, although he has owned and worked at trendy restaurants including some of the best, in New York and London. And, while he certainly has developed a sophisticated palate and approach along the path from his native France to London to New York and, finally, to Lexington, the white-tablecloth, heavy silver scene isn't Boughalem's thing, either.

Boughalem's thing is good, preferably local, food.

Now, he's making it available for lunch, happy hour, dinner, and after-the-show tastings at two locations in downtown Lexington. In spite of himself, Boughalem has created two trendy food spots that are leading Lexington palates down his iconoclastic path.

Krim Boughalem's Wine+Market, left, and Table Three Ten, above, are trendy additions to Lexington's food scene.

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After years in New York, Boughalem and his wife and business partner, Andrea Sims, decided to look for a different pace. “New York is hard on you,” he said, noting that the city is exciting but ultimately the grind is the same day after day. “We needed a break.”

They settled on Lexington, Sims’ hometown, and moved to a house on Third Street about five years ago.

The couple opened Wine+Market in 2008 at the then-sleepy corner of West Second and Jefferson. That business, as the name suggests, is a combination charcuterie, cheese, fresh produce, and wine store that’s open for customers who want to grab a late-morning pastry or get a sandwich of local paté on a baguette for lunch.

Late last year they expanded with Table Three Ten, just a few blocks away at 310 Short St., in the shadow of Lexington’s office towers and, for Boughalem’s purposes, conveniently next door to the Farmer’s Market. He wanted a way to make better and more use of the fresh and local products he found in abundance in the Bluegrass.

He’d seen the birth of the bistro in New York, when less formal restaurants, offering smaller dishes, flexible menus, and local foods, carved out spots in the Big Apple. Lexington, he figured, could use



Tempting small plates give diners numerous options at Table Three Ten, which also has extensive wine and beer offerings.

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Above, Krim Boughalem and Andrea Sims bring different talents to their joint business. Right, Wine+Market sells an array of cheeses.

a place where the food and the atmosphere are a little bit edgier and the doors don't close at 8 p.m. So at Table Three Ten, Boughalem offers a wide variety of small plates and interesting wines at reasonable prices from 5 p.m. until 11 p.m. on weekdays and until midnight on weekends.

The offerings range from fresh oysters to scallop ceviche to pizzas baked in a 3,000-pound oven — so heavy that its installation cracked the floor.

Just as important, Boughalem believes, is what you won't see on the menu: "Not the traditional dinner with a chicken dish and a salad. No French fries, no Bud Light, no Miller Lite."



Below, Boughalem stocks Wine+Market with interesting labels.



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Sunrise Bakery supplies fresh bread.

That should be no surprise to diners who walk through the hand-welded glass-and-metal entry into an urban, industrial space with an unpainted ceiling, rough plaster behind the bar, task-lights stretching out over tables, and hand-lettered signs announcing the specials.

Sims, an interior designer, is largely responsible for the décor in both locations. She chose the colors, arranged the spaces, and painted on the walls to give each a distinct, subtle, but unique look.



A cappuccino and a pastry are a perfect late-morning pick-me-up.

Boughalem's father-in-law, Robert Sims, owns the building, which, dating to about 1840, is one of the oldest buildings in downtown Lexington. The process of transforming it from an office building into a restaurant was long, painstaking, and revelatory in more ways than one. The original birch flooring was buried under four layers of coverings; the wooden ceiling was hidden above more modern treatments. A friend who is a carpenter worked for a year making all the furnishings for the restaurant, including the built-in banquettes. The project went through four plumbers before finding one who could make the new work inside the old.

But nothing matched the challenge of the basement. "No one had been down there in 40 years," Boughalem said.

Now, after what amounted to an excavation project to clear out the rubbish and the rubble and to add new stairs and finishes throughout, the basement is a well-lit kitchen for prep work and making handcrafted pickles, jams, and relishes for both Three Ten and Wine+Market; Boughalem also plans to make his own beer, Town Branch, down there.

It's all been worth it.

To cook well, he said, "You need a point of view, a focus, a philosophy. Without that, there's no pleasure in it." Boughalem's

focus includes finding the best and freshest.

That's the philosophy Boughalem, 45, developed, without any culinary school input, in the years since he got his first restaurant job at 14.

"You have to dig and dig all the time," he said. He found an oyster supplier on the West Coast; works with four farmers locally to get seasonal produce, local chicken, and meats; and buys his bread from Sunrise Bakery, a block or two away. The list goes on and on, and the search never ends.

"It's been helpful to have some people in the food business who are excited about using local produce and understand about seasonality," said David Wagoner, a partner with his wife, Arwen Donahue, in Three Springs Farm in Nicholas County. They have been selling to Boughalem since Wine+Market opened.

Wagoner's growing choices have expanded because of Boughalem, he said. These days, with an eager customer at hand, he keeps arugula and mizuna going in his garden and greenhouse longer than he would otherwise.

"It's a fun, creative sort of collaboration," Wagoner said. "Krim's doing things in a very artful, tasteful way, and it's delightful for us to see our produce add to what he's doing."

What Boughalem is doing is expanding Lexington's food literacy. He admits that not everyone can deal with the idea of a restaurant where you order a series of small plates instead of one big meal; where wines are offered by the taste, the glass, the carafe, and the bottle; where the menu changes almost daily.

But he's found Lexington and Lexingtonians largely willing to join him in the experiment. "Some can't deal with it, but 96 percent of people understand and like it," he said. "If you give them a choice, they'll try something else."

Boughalem's 96 percent begins with the after-work crowd that comes in at 5 for happy-hour drinks and fresh oysters and continues through the evening when young professional couples stop in for inexpensive dinners. About 10 p.m., when most of Lexington's restaurants are ushering late diners out the door, a younger crowd comes in for a late-evening bite.



Customers can linger over lunch or grab something delicious to-go at Wine+Market.



"We have everything — it's the most eclectic crowd I've seen in Lexington," Boughalem said.

He likes Lexington and sees boundless food opportunities here. He thinks native pawpaws and black walnuts go to waste, that the apples and pears "are tremendous." In Central Kentucky he sees more options, more choices. "There's potential here; that's why I like it so much."

Boughalem has no interest in getting bigger for the sake of size. He'll keep his focus on creating interesting, inviting spaces where adventurous diners can find good food.

"I do what I do." 🍷

Wine+Market
486W Second St.
Lexington, KY 40507
(859) 225-0755
Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

TableThreeTen
310West Short St.
Lexington, KY 40507
(859) 309-3901
Monday-Friday, 5 p.m. to 11 p.m.
Saturday, 5 p.m. to midnight