

## Bustling cafe with a French twist

By [Gwenn Friss](#)

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HYANNIS - La Petite France - more commonly called (around my office a half-block away) the French bakery or the French place - is where I go for subtly flavored homemade soups, creative sandwiches and comfort foods, such as pot roast and meatloaf.

And this may sound strange, but I love the fact that it almost always has avocado and roasted red peppers - two of my favorite ingredients on sandwiches and salads.

Owner Ian Parent (who bought the cafe in 2005 after managing it for four years) and the folks who work with him have a great blend of good basics (bakery-fresh breads, croissants, muffins and killer-good chocolate chip cookies) combined with a slightly different take on classics: There is cranberry mayonnaise for turkey sandwiches; the chicken salad has golden raisins and seasonings; the tuna is made with poppy seeds.

With a half-dozen tables nestled between the bakery case and the plate-glass front window, La Petite France is no place for a clandestine meeting. But it is a hub where you can rub elbows with Main Street neighbors and smile at tourists gathered in front of the window debating their next move.

But back to the food. La Petite France has a small menu that is basically doubled with daily specials, written on the chalkboard or e-mailed each day if you sign up for the service. You can call ahead for takeout - not a bad idea since it's a small place and the one or two people behind the counter are sometimes swamped.

Breakfast sandwiches sell for \$3-\$4; lunch usually runs \$6-\$8, plus beverage. The crew is great about special orders. You can have it your way.

The cafe serves top-quality Boars Head meats, and has a larger selection of cheeses than the average breakfast-lunch place. There is nothing like Brie on multigrain bread or a baguette that's been grilled in the panini maker.

Based on many visits, my only complaint about the cafe is that coffee held in thermal containers is often cool by afternoon. If they heat it up for you (and they will), ask to have it done with the steam wand, because microwaving coffee evaporates some of the water, leaving the remaining brew bitter.

Although I try not to be a creature of habit, I usually get the cup of soup and half-sandwich special (\$6.49). I've yet to have a bad soup, but favorites include butternut squash and apple, wild mushroom, corn chowder, cream of tomato and the summer gazpacho.

La Petite France is like having mom or dad cook for you. You tend to take the uniformly good food for granted until you hit that special that makes you say, "Hey, this is really good."

## LA PETITE FRANCE

349 Main St., Hyannis

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