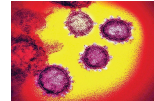




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The menu at The Spot is created so customers can quickly order and get their food while on the go.
BERKSHIRE EAGLE FILE PHOTO

The Spot still the spot to be

Posted Friday, July 19, 2019 11:15 am

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What: The Spot

Where: 381 Tyler St., Pittsfield

Hours: Open daily, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

By Nicolas Davidoff, The Berkshire Eagle

PITTSFIELD — "We've introduced people of all ages to a lot of new products and foods and everyone has generally been really grateful for it," Jonathan Vella said. "That's definitely the most rewarding part for me."

Vella, or Von as he is affectionately known, founded The Spot just over a year ago. They serve up freshly made smoothies and acai bowls and also offer their store as a space for local vendors to showcase a variety of items ranging from custom clothing to CBD products.

Vella, with a constant smile across his face, shouts out a "Yezzir!" after each order. He then chops up bananas, strawberries, and pineapples behind the counter — putting them into the blender or layering

the fruit on top of the purple acai base.

"I was traveling around the country, especially on the West Coast, and I was eating acai bowls all the time," Vella said. "I couldn't eat the typical breakfast; I don't like dairy or eggs and if I did eat them I would feel way down all the time. I didn't even eat breakfast anymore really, but then I tried an acai bowl and it was life changing for me. I started eating them all the time and then I got into juices and smoothies and I've been eating mostly that since then."

Vella's passion for healthy eating followed him back to Pittsfield, where he partnered with Craig Hopkins to purchase an old Subway restaurant on Tyler Street.

"The location was convenient because we didn't have to do anything, we just had to outfit it. They had already done all the dirty work, so we just had to pimp it out," Vella said.

The Spot offers a simple menu, which is designed to satisfy almost every taste while still keeping the line moving at a steady pace.

"The Wake Up smoothie is our most popular," Vella said. "It's kind of like our breakfast joint. It's a great breakfast alternative if you're on the go."

This \$8, 455-calorie breakfast in a cup is made with a coffee and banana base, cacao, almond milk, protein powder, and almond butter.

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The \$9, 490-calorie GoTo bowl — The Spot's most popular acai concoction — is topped with banana slices, raspberries, strawberries and blueberries.

And what exactly is acai?

"Acai is a berry from the rainforest from Brazil," Vella said. "They're a bit bitter. Acai is part of the drupe fruit family. The same one as apricots, olives and dates. I like to think of it kind of like blueberries on steroids. They're high on omega oils, omega fats, high on antioxidants."

Acai bowls have been all the rage lately, and Vella's travels around the country made him realize that opening a healthy eatery might be a successful business venture.

"After I moved to Pittsfield, I kept traveling a bit and kept going out West intermittently," Vella said. "I noticed that there were more of these kinds of spots every time I went. It made me realize that this was a thing, so I decided to go for it myself."

But The Spot is more than just an acai bowl and smoothie shop. Vella uses the shelves and the empty space on the counter to showcase and sell the products that his friends make. A rack is filled with custom clothing and hats that are decorated with a smoothie patch. Bracelets and pendants sit next to the iPad that functions as The Spot's cash register. All kinds of CBD products — from gummies to bath bombs — rest on top of the transparent fridge that houses the fresh fruit.

"We sell a bunch of other stuff too," Vella said. "Originally, I wanted it to be an eco-hub, a sort of ecosystem. All these products are made by locals, so while you wait for our healthy items you also have a chance to support the ecosystem of people around us."

Vella has lofty goals for The Spot and he is optimistic about the revival that Tyler Street has undergone in recent years.

"The way I see it is it's going to be a bit more artistic. It just seems like there are all these small businesses opening up," Vella said. "We want to keep making The Spot more community based by starting fundraisers, backpack drives, and other things like that. The thing I like about Pittsfield is that there is so much community work going on. Whenever I leave town, that's what I miss the most and I just want to keep building on that here."