

# The New York Times

NEW JERSEY DINING | MONTCLAIR

## Treated Like Dogs? Yes, and Very Well



Nancy Wegard for The New York Times

**SUSTAINABLE AND SEASONAL** Market, in Montclair.

By [DAVID CORCORAN](#)

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HERE is a first, for me anyway: a restaurant owner whose day job is training dogs.

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Nancy Wegard for The New York Times  
Peaches with arugula and sweet  
Champagne vinaigrette.

No jokes, please. If you think about it, working with pets requires an instinct for human behavior; as Cesar Millan, the famed Dog Whisperer, puts it: “I rehabilitate dogs. I train people.”

So perhaps it wasn't such a stretch for Joshua Cederbaum — the buoyant 30-year-old owner of [Doggy Tales](#), a company that works with animal shelters to rehabilitate lost or abandoned dogs — to open [Market](#) in downtown Montclair in May, in the midst of the worst economic downturn in memory. And in hindsight, it's clear he knew just what it would take to captivate this food-obsessed town:

A staff as outgoing as he is, one that observes his dress code — miscellaneous T-shirts and shorts or jeans — and imparts a “We try harder” ethic that feels genuine and winning.

A sweetly nostalgic early-20th-century railroad-car diner (the former Greek Delights) with just 45 seats, 18 of them at a counter trimmed with a hand-painted nursery rhyme: “To market, to market to buy a fat pig ... .”

And most important, a menu (top price: \$19) that lives up to the restaurant's name — abundant with fresh produce from local markets, mainly organic and grown or raised on farms within a day's drive of Montclair.

“Sustainable and seasonal” is the culinary mantra du jour, of course, and such claims should be viewed with narrowed eyes, even at a restaurant whose countertops hold wooden crates overflowing with fat, gorgeous eggplants and ears of corn in the bright green

peak of health.

But to sample one of the “market plates” here — a choice of appetizer-size, largely [vegetarian](#) dishes, at one for \$5 or four for \$16 — is to know that Market means what it says. The chef, Dave Augenti, a 28-year-old Morris County native who acquired his fresh-and-local chops in the kitchen of a seaside restaurant in Northern California, delivers an all-star lineup.

One recent evening, our group of six (seated at two adjoining booths, since the old diner’s configuration means a limit of four to a table) shared two of these plates, passing them back and forth. They were magazine-cover art, and they tasted as exuberant as they looked.

On one plate were glowingly purple beets, steamed until tender and tossed with goat cheese and walnuts; pale green cucumbers in a satiny cilantro crème fraîche; bright red heirloom [tomatoes](#) in chive pesto; and perfect golden Jersey peaches, seared with honey and cinnamon.

The assortment on the other plate was not quite so photogenic but texturally bolder: whole baby carrots, glazed with honey butter; half an ear of corn flecked with black from the grill; green beans sautéed with almonds and orange zest; and a dish that competed with a hanger steak entree for meatiest: thick, chewy collard greens with a generous, smoke-infused hunk of bacon.

Whew. Perhaps fortunately, since I was nearly full by then, few main courses reached such heights. The hanger steak was pleasant, with a sweet coffee-orange glaze; the dish’s strongest element was a tangy horseradish potato salad. Two pan-fried chicken thighs in ale batter got the comfort-food job done, especially with their side of blue corn bread drizzled with citrus honey.

A monkfish kebab was moist, peppery and handsomely charred, with the firm texture of [lobster](#), but grouper en papillote — steamed and served in cooking parchment — was seriously overdone.

My favorite desserts were the individual blueberry and peach pies, served in bake-sale foil pans, with a scoop of mouth-puckering house-made frozen yogurt. (You can also order the yogurt by itself, with various toppings.)

Market’s kitchen is so tiny it can hold just a single six-burner stove, with no room for a walk-in refrigerator. So Mr. Cederbaum says he is already looking for more spacious quarters downtown. More power to him. Skilled trainer that he is, he already has this demanding town eating out of his hand.

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## **Market**

*14 Park Street*

*Montclair*

*(973) 744-2244*

[marketmontclair.com](http://marketmontclair.com)

## **VERY GOOD**

**THE SPACE** A gently timeworn former diner. Seating is in four-person booths or at the counter, so large groups will be divided. Not accessible to wheelchairs.

**THE CROWD** Sophisticated but casual. Families with young children abound. **THE STAFF** Charming and attentive. The kitchen is tiny, so delays can arise as orders back up.

**THE BAR** Bring your own wine.

**THE BILL** Brunch entrees, \$6 to \$12. Dinner entrees, \$13 to \$19. American Express, MasterCard and Visa are accepted.

**WHAT WE LIKE** All market plates; all salads; pan-fried chicken, monkfish skewers, [risotto](#); fruit pies.

**IF YOU GO** Closed Tuesday. Dinner: Sunday, 5 to 9 p.m.; Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, 4:30 to 10 p.m.; Friday, 4:30 to 11 p.m.; Saturday, 5 to 11 p.m. Brunch: Saturday and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. No reservations accepted. The restaurant's Web site has a helpful parking map.

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