

CTPA Visits Chicago's French Market

About two dozen CTPA members were able to have an up close and personal tour of the Chicago French Market at Ogilvie Station on **February 25, 2016**. The Market operated by the third generation Bensidoun family from France since 2009 is a very unique place. There are more than 30 artisan vendors featuring food, beer, wine, flowers and gifts. Included in the long list of offerings are local and organic produce, meat and poultry, smoked and deli meats, raw and vegan foods, fresh flowers, baked goods and pastries, fish and seafood, prepared meats, gelato, artisan cheeses, soups, salads and sandwiches, freshly squeezed juices, freshly baked breads, international cuisine, locally made goods, olives and pickles, crepes, specialty chocolates and candies, fresh herbs, kosher foods and specialty coffee and teas.

We were fortunate to have our visit directed by **Marian Jarocki** who is the **Director of Leasing for the Market**. She explained also how she finds the different vendors with their unique style for the Market. Sometimes it takes years of courting before a vendor enters the Chicago French Market. For some, the Market is their first venue, for others it is in addition to a stand alone business in another area of Chicago or a food truck.



There were new vendors one who had been open in the French Market a few weeks; **Vegan Now**, a soul vegetarian establishment. The first soul vegetarian restaurant to open in the country and is based on the south side, serving plant based food as described in the Bible. (<http://www.frenchmarketchicago.com/vendor/vegannow> - 773-443-0033) The sample we tried tasted like chicken, but wasn't and was quite spicy.

The other vendor who was yet to open, but was there to greet us, was **Aloha Poke Company**. They have a Hawaiian spin on sushi. (www.alohapokeco.com)



Pastoral, Artisan Cheese, Bread and Wine purveyor was the first tenant and now has three locations, opening a fourth soon in Andersonville. Some of the vendors were nice enough to have samples prepared for us.

We were able taste Montreal style pastrami at **Fumare Meats and Deli** (www.fumaremeats.com 312 930 4220).

Vine Gusto, open since December 15, is a German food innovator serving dessert sipping vinegars as well as red and white wines. They recommend trying their palate pleasing vinegars over cheese or with seltzer water. We tried a blackberry vinegar drizzled on cheese. <http://www.vinegusto-store.com/>



We sampled a lobster roll from **Da Lobsta** that has two other locations and a food truck (www.dalobstachicago.com 312

207 5705). **Black Dog Gelato** had a small taste for us; they also have another location on Belmont. (773 348 7935) The matriarchal mother at **Saigon Sisters** still helps run the business as they have expanded to a full restaurant around the corner at Jefferson and Lake. The market was their first location. (www.saigonsisters.com 312 496 0090)



A dessert like offering included cinnamon sugar donut holes still warm from **Beavers Coffee and Donuts**. They also have a food truck. (www.beaversdonuts.com, 773 392 1300)

Ladies were given a long stem rose from Jason at **Le Fleurs**. (312 463 1111).

We had a meatball with marinara sauce from **Polpetti** (meatball in Italian). Tony, who spoke with us, started Polpetti with his brother. They are first generation from Naples and are using their grandmother's recipe for the meatballs. They were really good! Check out www.mypolpetti.com.

All were offered a flaky fried cod sample at **LaMaree Seafood**, which was excellent! They are part of the **City Fresh Produce Market**. All the prepared dishes are made right there at the Market. There were many young professionals getting dinner items to go as we walked the market. (www.cityfreshmarket.com 312 575 0230).



We ended at **Vanille**, having an incredible macaroon flavor of our choice. (www.vanillepatisseri.com 773 868 4574).



An excellent chocolate pistachio encrusted truffle was a complimentary offering from **Lolli & Pops** <http://www.lolliandpops.com/>.

On this night, the CTPA members present were able to use a \$12 voucher with participating vendors and we were also able to redeem another voucher for a complimentary beer or wine. The live musical entertainment had recently started and there was a reserved section for CTPA in the seating area at the back of the market, which can accommodate about 300 people.



The Market enjoys a brisk commuter crowd in the morning and is busy at lunch and in the evening. Marian estimates about seven thousand people per day come into the market. On Wednesday and Thursday they have live music from 4:30 pm to 5:30pm and there are happy hour specials daily. There is one hour free parking with a \$20 purchase.

The hours are Monday through Friday 7:00am to 7:30pm, Saturday 8:30am to 5:30pm and closed on Sunday. At 131 N. Clinton buses can be parked out in front of the Market. **If you call Marian Jarocki ahead she will have a voucher for the guide and the coach driver to have lunch while the group shops and dine.** No need to worry about parking the vehicle so the driver can eat. Just be sure to advise the vehicle type and size when reserving for your group and Marion will find a parking place! There are spots indoors and out.

Leslie Cahill, Director of Midwest Operations and General Manager of the Chicago French Market (312 575 0286) was also on hand to greet us. Both she and Marian Jarocki (312 456 7023 or 312 560 2752 cell) were excited that we would now consider the Chicago French Market as a stop during a tour. Again the French Market is at **131 N. Clinton between Washington and Randolph.** <http://www.frenchmarketchicago.com/index.php>

There will be an Grand Re-Opening event at the Chicago French Market on **April 6, 2016**, from 5:30 to 8:30 pm. CTPA members were sent an email “opt in” invitation. Just RSVP to attend.

Notes taken by: Gina V Driskell, Co-Secretary
Photos provided by Donna Primas, CTG

