SIN CITY

GONE TO HEAVEN AT VICES ET VERSA

MAEVE HALDANE

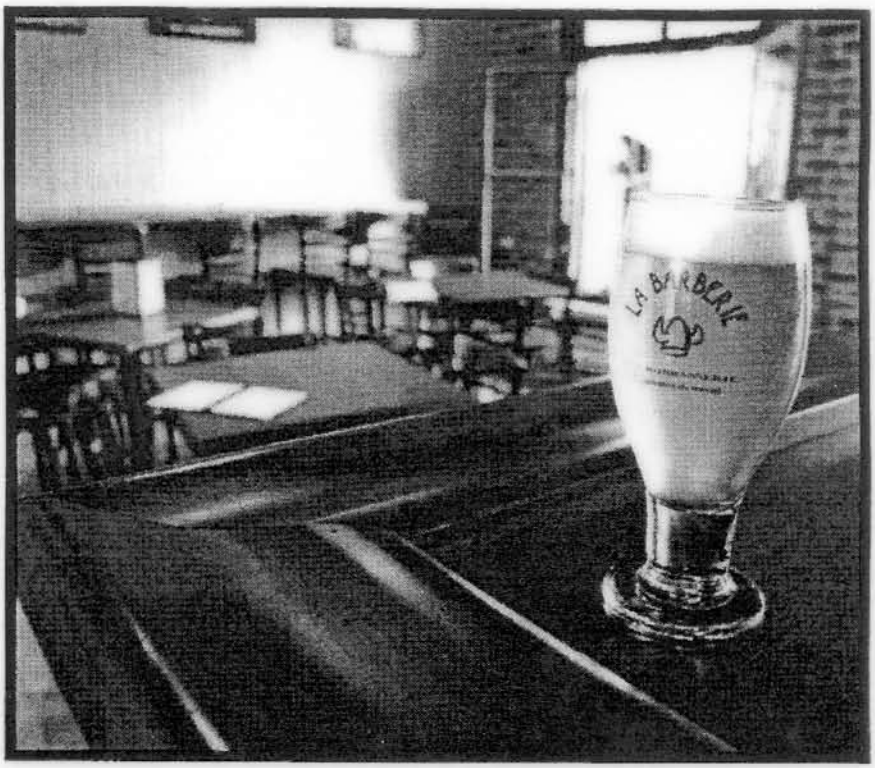
Open only a few months, Vices et Versa already feels like home. On a recent Thursday post-workday piss up, plenty of folks came in to have some beer, munch on locally produced nibblies, and bask in the aural pleasure of good tunes. It's around the corner from hipster joint Sablo Kafé, and thanks to their combined presence, Little Italy has been funkified.

Being summer (finally), everyone will want to sit on the terrasse. It's temporarily closed while licensing is worked out, so we made do with the cosy interior, where the ceiling moulding is painted copper to mirror the warm wood of the chairs and tables. Walls are sea green, sky blue and brick. Smoke curls above patrons' heads, leading your eye to the crazy-bright paintings hung there.

Owners Nathalie and Sebastien hail from the small town of Saint-Tite, home to Eastern Canada's biggest Western festival. Their countryside roots have led them to be fervent advocates of regional goods.

The menu is small and summer-budget friendly. Sausages are flavourful and not fatty, the salad simply dressed with a sweet citrus mix. The pizzas are on pita – we liked the quartier version with ground meat and tangy cheeses and admired the feta-spinach that sailed by.

A big seller is the plate of vices that lets you take a trip through the province via your tastebuds. Pick from among five cheeses and two pâtés, served with a sprinkling of olives and almonds and accompanied by three kinds of confit. We tried 'em all, including a smooth salty Riopelle, a pleasantly sour goat cheddar (paired with the carrot and cardamom jam, as suggested by Nathalie), and a firm nutty Cantonnier (great with onion and clove). As for the Benedictine blue, well, it's served with pear and ginger (I found that one too sweet). The pâtés from Mont-Laurier were slightly crumbly, yet moist, and top-notch. I liked them with the onion and clove blend, but that jam could make a dishcloth palatable it's so good.



VICES ET VERSA: GLASS CEILING
photo Joseph Yarmush

Quebec City brewery La Barberie supplies them with suds. They always have on hand a Barberousse red bock; Mistigris, a blonde ale; and Paillasson, a white beer made with blueberry honey. Other random varieties included a refreshing raspberry lime ale, a pretty peach-coloured blonde with berries, and a chocolatey stout. On a recent night they'd just opened a keg of barley wine purchased at the recent Mondiale de la bière. The 11-per-cent-alcohol malty brew (think a sweet rich ale) had a creamy yellow head and went down beautifully.

The best deal? Get a selection of six galopins, sample-sized glasses of beer, which come in a carrousel. That way you can sample 'em all. Or just get one galopin at a time for a mere $1.25. They also serve Quebec spruce beer, wine, honey wine, and multiple types of cider – a light one on tap, a tart one in the bottle, an apple wine and an ice cider. This place could be the apple of anybody's eye.(·)

VICES ET VERSA
6631 ST-LAURENT BLVD.; 272-2498
OPEN DAILY FROM 3 P.M.
WWW.VICESETVERSA.COM
BOOZE AND EATS FOR TWO,
NOT INCLUDING TAX, TIP: $20-$30

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