

Amadeus

A few blocks west on Washington St., tucked into a renovated 1876 building, is the award-winning Amadeus. From the moment you walk through the semi-circular curtained entrance, you're surrounded by the ambiance of Old Europe. Hand-carved wooden figurines decorate the piano top and ledges; old family photographs grace the walls. You wouldn't be surprised to see Marlene Dietrich at a corner table.



Pawel Strózyński started Amadeus in 1988 after landing in the U.S. almost by accident. He learned to cook from his grandfather, a Polish restaurateur, senator, and violinist who escaped to France after the Battle of Verdun. Pawel attended school in Sweden and later worked in restaurants in Austria and Hungary. In 1981, at the age of 28, he fled Communist Poland by way of Munich, along with several of his sailing buddies. He still sails frequently in exotic locations with the same friends.

“At the time, we planned to go to Australia,” he muses, “but they refused to take refugees. So we came to the U.S. instead.”

He ended up in Ann Arbor through the family of a former fiancée. Pawel owns and runs Amadeus with his nephew, Bartek Koss. The cuisine is Central European, borrowing from his background: Polish, Hungarian, Austrian, even Swedish. Pickle soup, chicken paprikash, Hungarian potato pancakes with goulash, and pierogis are staples, followed by the pastries he makes himself. His own version of Sacher torte (a dense chocolate cake glazed with apricot and chocolate again) is “more popular than the original.” He also makes his own Napoleons with a lighter custard than usual, assembling them just before serving.

When he's not “crazy busy” in the kitchen, he loves talking to diners. “When guests return here from Vienna, they say, ‘you know, Pawel, we miss your pastries,’” he laughs. **ASM**