

Three Cats restaurant about to open in former Clawson movie theater

[Susan Selasky](#), Detroit Free Press Published 10:13 a.m. ET Sept. 11, 2019 | Updated 10:50 a.m. ET Sept. 11, 2019



Inside the Show at Leon & Lulu in Clawson. (Photo: Leon & Lulu)

After more than eight months of planning and a kitchen build out, Three Cats restaurant will open Tuesday inside the former Clawson movie theater on 14 Mile Road.

Three Cats is a collaboration between Mary Liz Curtin, co-owner of the popular Leon & Lulu boutique in downtown Clawson, and longtime Michigan restaurateur Matt Prentice.

“I have admired Matt’s food and knack for service for many years,” Curtin said in a statement. “I cannot imagine starting a restaurant with anyone else. Three Cats will make Leon & Lulu a complete destination where guests can enjoy a fine meal as well as great shopping.”



A table setting at the Three Cats restaurant inside the Show at Leon & Lulu in Clawson. (Photo: Leon & Lulu)

Prentice's previous restaurants included the former Coach Insignia at the top of the Renaissance Center, Deli Unique, Shiraz, Morels and several more. Prentice jumped back into the restaurant business after a court-ordered, five-year, non-compete agreement expired with a former restaurant group employer expired last October.

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Three Cats is located at 116 W. 14 Mile Road inside the former Clawson movie theater, which opened in 1941 and showed its last film in 1961. The marquee still hangs in front of the building.



Veteran chef Matt Prentice is bringing an American small plates restaurant to the former Clawson Theatre in partnership with the owners of Leon & Lulu. (Photo: Jessica J. Trevino, Jessica J. Trevino, Detroit Free)

The old theater has been used for several years as an annex to Leon & Lulu next-door and will continue to be partially used for retail space. Leon & Lulu features furniture, gift items, clothing and specialty items.

Seating for the restaurant will be amid sofas, chairs and tables, with many of them for sale. The restaurant will seat up to 99 inside and there will be two large communal tables. On the patio, weather permitting, is seating for 50.



Mary Liz Curtin and Matt Prentice have teamed up opening the Three Cats restaurant inside the Show at Leon & Lulu (Photo: Leon & Lulu)

Prentice, 60, calls the menu offerings "simple American small plates."

"There's not a whole lot of that (small plates) going on in the suburbs, there is downtown, where lunch and dinner is 100% small plates," Prentice said.

The plates, a lot of them, he said, will be composition.

"They won't have just one item, they will be composed of a meat, starch and vegetables and meant to be shared.

Prentice said the menu will also have a large vegan and vegetarian fare to start.

"I am also trying to keep the menu as local as possible as the season allows it," Prentice said.

From the waters, he said, all the fish will be from Michigan, especially in the summertime when the fish is available. There will also be a few seafood items, such as Florida shrimp.



Patio seating at Three Cats restaurant at The Show at Leon & Lulu in Clawson. (Photo: Leon & Lulu)

"One thing is unusual, at least in southern Michigan is we'll have Chinook salmon from the Great Lakes," he said.

In the winter months Prentice said they'll shift toward more meat-centric.

Prentice said he wants to focus on what people are not doing.

"We will have a lot of duck on the menu because it's not done enough," he said. There will be duck confit and duck liver in mousse form."

Expect prices to start at \$6 and go up to \$20. Prentice said the idea is to not exceed \$20. And if it does, Prentice said, it will be a special and not on the daily menu.

The idea, Prentice said, is to make it approachable to everybody.

"It's very much geared to those that want to go and graze and eat with friends and share things," Prentice said.

Three Cats, Prentice said, will feature all American wines. Beers are all Michigan crafts.

Most all of the alcohol selection will be American and heavily dominated by locals such as Ferndale's Valentine Distillery and Two James Spirits in Detroit's Corktown.

Prentice said he's committed to local if he can do it.

The location, of course, was a huge draw for Prentice. He likes the small town feel of it and that there's great parking.



Outdoor patio seating at the Three Cats restaurant inside the Show at Leon & Lulu in Clawson. (Photo: Leon & Lulu)

"I grew up in Royal Oak and I knew Clawson as a kid," he said. "It's kind of stood still in time while Royal Oak, Birmingham and Troy have all sprung up. And it's still small town. And I like that people can get to it easily."



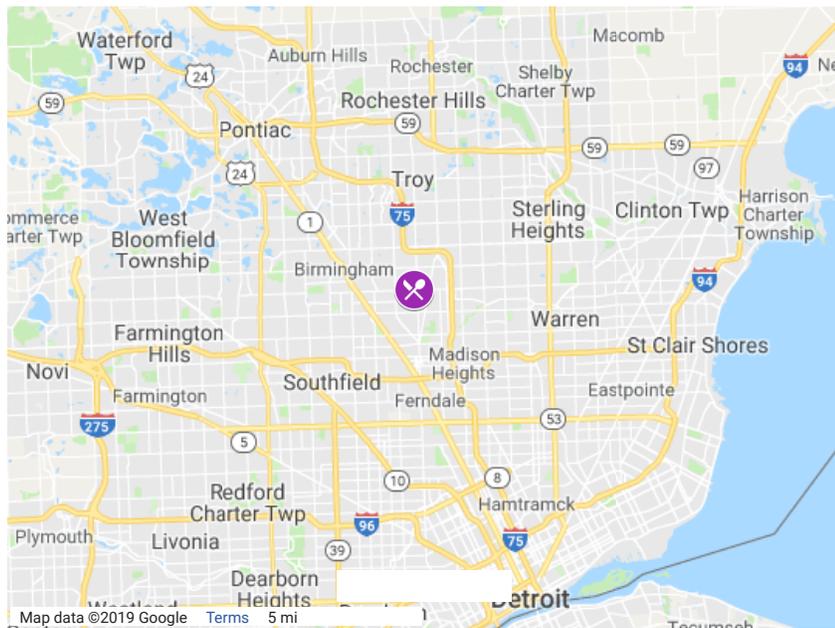
Three Cats restaurants inside the Show at Leon & Lulu in Clawson. (Photo: Leon & Lulu)

Three Cats will have a special preview dinner opening on Sept. 17. The dinner benefits Cass Community Social Services (CCSS), the Detroit-based agency that provides food, housing, health services and job programs to those in need. Tickets include dinner and cocktails. Tickets are \$150 with all proceeds going to CCSS. To purchase tickets, go to www.threecatsrestaurant.com (<http://threecatscafe.com/>).

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Three Cats restaurant ☆



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