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THE APPETIZER

Montreal's tiniest restaurant serves up a lobster lover's favourite treat



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By **Jessical Pollack**

When I booked a trip to Montauk, N.Y., last month, I was intent on visiting The Lobster Roll, a restaurant justly acclaimed for its namesake menu item. The almost-US\$30 roll was fantastic enough to be worth the four-hour drive to Amagansett, on the way to Montauk, but turned out not to be the only delectable lobster roll I would experience this summer — and for the next one, I wouldn't even have to leave the country.

Resto Muvbox, in Montreal's Old Port, is a shipping crate-cum-food stand with a short menu catering to tourists and locals alike, offering seafood-laden pizzas, clam chowder, Cape Cod chips, soda and (drum roll please) a lobster roll for \$9.95.

“From my trips to Maine as a child, I always came back with a craving for lobster rolls,” says Muvbox founder Daniel Noiseaux. He was surprised to see that they hadn't caught on in Montreal, and set out to bring a taste of New England to Quebec.

Much like myself, Noiseaux is a lobster purist, shunning garlic butter and other such overwhelming accompaniments for a simple mix of very good mayonnaise, diced celery, salt and pepper.

“We really want the lobster to speak for itself.”

The toasted bun is devoid of the grease common to traditional rolls, including my far costlier lunch in Montauk. It's a clean affair, and the sweet, challah-like bun is just crisped enough to coddle the sweet lobster meat while also softly melding with it. Now in its third year, the Montreal location is thriving. At rush hour, the wee stand turns out approximately four lobster rolls each minute, with the lobster filling blended in an almost made-to-order manner (Noiseaux warns that the meat falls apart if prepared in advance). This accounts for another reason the roll's recipe remains unfussy.

"If we want to offer a quality product at this kind of value, we have to keep it simple," he says.

The innovative food stand is a marvel in itself, much of it constructed from recycled materials, with solar panels providing some of the petite operation's power and the ability to pack up and move locations in a matter of minutes. The design has been adapted to additional locations, including one in Toronto's Brookfield Place. Most recently, concession operators at the Eiffel Tower in Paris started using a Muvbox to serve quick, seasonal fare to tourists. But Montreal was the prototype.

Noiseaux has plans to expand the award-winning concept even further, franchising the Lobster Box and offering more customizable variations, each with traditional dishes prepared at a higher quality than average street food.

Nurturing local vendors is also a must, and Noiseaux takes pride in the fact that he has helped Quebec's lobster fisherman promote their product.

Having just seen the amazing exhibit on French designer Jean Paul Gaultier at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts that morning, I also had France on the brain. As I left Noiseaux's Lobster Box to wander the cobbled streets of Old Montreal, a tummy full of tender lobster, I dared to dream of another Muvbox encounter: Next summer, chez Paris.

Resto Muvbox: Lobster Box, 360 Rue de la Commune West (at Rue McGill), Montreal.

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