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Pazzo Gelato Cafe

Jim Demotses said goodbye to a life in law to pursue a more palatable dream.

Some might call the notion of leaving a successful career to open a new business crazy. Luckily for gelato lovers in North Andover, resident Jim Demotses calls it "pazzo."

Italian for "crazy," **Pazzo Gelato Cafe** celebrated its grand opening this past Mother's Day weekend as the city's newest authentic gelateria—and Demotses's dream come true.

Morphing his culinary arts hobby into this full-



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time business, the Peabody lawyer traded in a desk for a gelato counter and Montblancs for scoops. Surrounded by a colorful mural, reclaimed wood tables, and a state-of-the-art gelato machine imported from Italy, he couldn't be happier.

"People who know me know that I've always had a food bug," he explains. "I don't think anybody was that surprised when I switched career paths. Deep down, I never felt practicing law was my true calling."

Channeling his Greek heritage and his mother's sweet tooth and passion for making dessert, Demotses began his journey. Still working in law, he enrolled in an intensive night program at The Cambridge School of Culinary Arts, as well as studies at the Gelato and Pastry Institute of America in Long Island, NY. He also enrolled in an immersion program at Carpigiani Gelato University in North Carolina.

Then came the clean break. Now Demotses is in a world of made-from-scratch Italian desserts—think handcrafted gelato in chocolate hazelnut biscotti and wild Amarena cherry (Demotses's favorite) and its dairy-free cousin, sorbetto, in pineapple mango and cantaloupe. There are espresso drinks and baked goods galore, like artisanal caramel apple bread and mudslide cookies. Then, there are the hot-pressed panini, such as beef Florentine and chicken Milanese.

"I truly hope everyone who visits us sees how crazy and passionate I am about food, family, and the community," he says. His love for the Greater Merrimack Valley community is clear, whether it's employing talented local vocational students for assistance in making his gelato or providing a stage for acoustic performances by local musicians.

The café's shopping list is also a Who's Who of local farmers and suppliers. Demotses receives dairy products from Shaw Farm Dairy of Dracut, imported Italian meats and cheeses from CASA Foods of Middleton, pastries from Iggy's Bread in Cambridge, and breads and rolls from Jessica's Brick Oven in North Andover. Even their footprint is a step in the right direction with use of Black Earth Hauler of Gloucester and Brick Ends Farm of South Hamilton for composting.

And with all that sweet stuff, Demotses is happily involved every step of the way. "There's so much to gelato—flavor, texture, how it causes your palate to react. You have to sample everything. I use my family and friends as taste testers," he says. "They're all blaming me for their weight gain."

Extra calories aside, there are smiles all around. "There's no greater feeling than to create food and watch others enjoy it," Demotses says. [facebook.com/pazzogelatocafe](https://www.facebook.com/pazzogelatocafe) —Cheryl Fenton

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Jim Demotses, Pazzo Gelato Cafe Owner

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Two Hippies' Meg Erickson

Former model Meg Erickson's locally made handbags define chic simplicity.

Coco Chanel coined the less-is-more adage—remove one accessory before leaving the house. But it was an amendment to that famous fashion mantra that captured local handbag designer Meg Erickson's attention.

"Halston said 'Take off three,'" she laughs. "I like his better."

With years under her on-trend belt as a model in Milan and a stylist in New York and Boston, this Scituate native, now a Beverly resident, was eager to escape the world of tricked-out handbags.

"For me it was about the weight of the bag," Erickson says, recalling her time as a model, when crossbodies weren't common and back problems from carrying heavy portfolio bags were. "If you have 16 grommets and 14 buckles, that's already about two and a half pounds."

Since her experience brought to light a woman's need for a lighter bag, she wanted to develop a simple yet stylish line. Channeling the deliberate minimalistic style of her favorite designers Jil Sander and Céline, out went the zippers, grommets, chains, and bling. And so Meg Erickson Handbags was born.

"Women wear jewelry, glasses, bags, shoes, and boots," she explains. "A lot of these things have metal on them. I'm done with that."

With a Meg Erickson design, what you have is beautiful, rich Italian leather with streamlined appeal. The line launched under its original name, Two Hippies, in 2010 with its crossbody messenger—Erickson's nod to fellow busy moms toting small kids and big to-do lists. It has since grown into a variety of handcrafted leather totes, clutches, swags, and iPad covers.

In her atelier on the Bass River in Beverly, Erickson also bags the notion that design must involve a complicated machine-driven assembly line. Using ecologically tanned Italian leather, she makes her bags by hand, one at a time, cutting swaths herself with a pair of 18-inch brass-handled scissors. Expert local stitchers place together



Meg Erickson in her studio

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Her bags run \$135 to \$450 in boutiques across the country, from local loves including Marblehead's French + Italian and Gladstone in Manchester-by-the-Sea to far-off shops in St. Barth's and Beverly Hills.

"People love the sense of handcrafted [bags]," she explains. "The leather has been caressed and stitched by someone. It's been handled by maybe two people, not an assembly line. You can think, someone's hands have been all over this."

Fashion-conscious women want to get their own hands on the newest SWAG bag, as well as her two styles of clutches—a classic foldover and a fastened style that closes with a tiny Sam Browne fastener (the only adornment you'll find on her bags). Edgy for all ages, the nickel metallic crossbody is still everyone's favorite.

Regardless of cut or color, these simple and smart designs don't fight for attention and "let you see the woman under the clothes," according to Erickson.

"We're too fussy," she says. "There are too many fussy items out there for us to wear. Women are already gorgeous." twohippies.com —Cheryl Fenton // Photographs by Adam Detour



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