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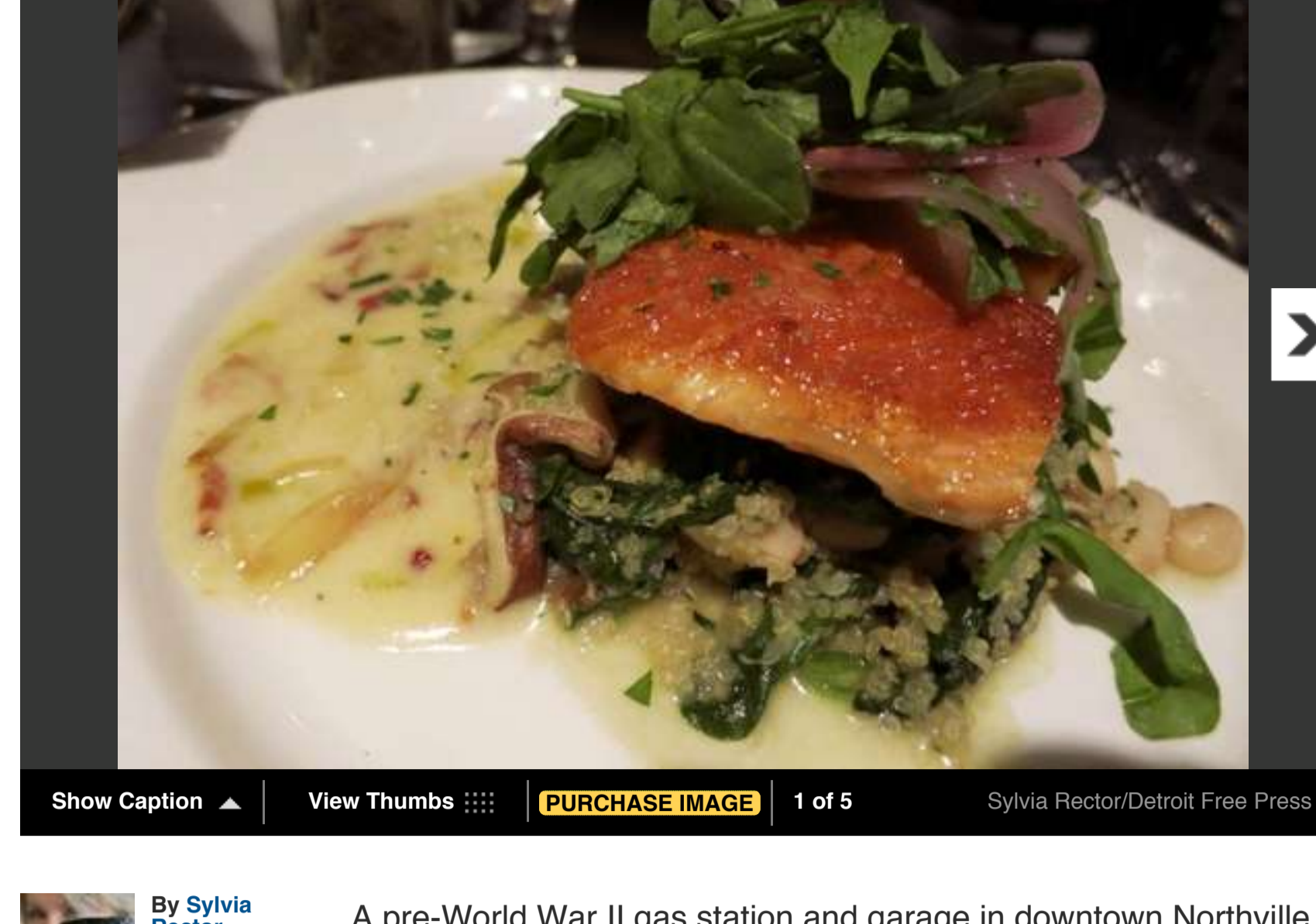
Former gas station becomes new dining spot in Northville

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By Sylvia Rector Detroit Free Press Restaurant Critic

A pre-World War II gas station and garage in downtown Northville has been reborn as a handsome new restaurant.

The Garage Grill & Fuel Bar opened Nov. 27, serving a casual American menu that ranges from burgers and hand-tossed pizzas to lasagna, fried chicken and sauteed lake perch.

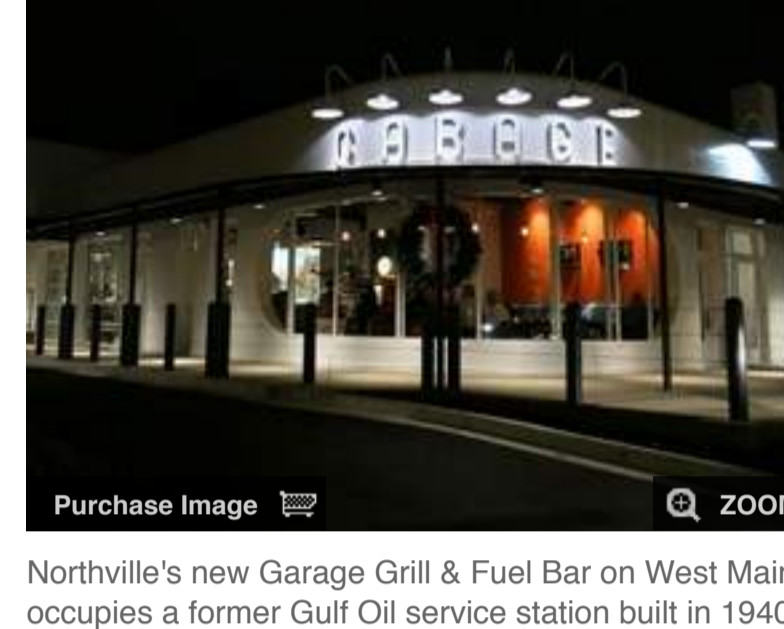
On my scouting visit last weekend, service was friendly and attentive, and restaurant managers were visiting tables to ask guests for feedback. Look for a review of the food later, after the kitchen has time to hit its stride.

In a telephone interview this week, managing partner Mike Bageris said the crowds have been almost overwhelming, and the restaurant is hiring more staff.

"We are tickled pink with the business. It has been bigger and better than we thought," he said.

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Prices are designed to be moderate enough for everyday dining, Bageris said. Starters, salads and soups are mostly \$6-\$11; pizzas run \$9-\$13; and most entrees are in the teens to mid-\$20s.



Purchase Image ZOOM Northville's new Garage Grill & Fuel Bar on West Main occupies a former Gulf Oil service station built in 1940. / Sylvia Rector/Detroit Free Press

The distinctive white building with the rounded front corner, located at Main and Wing streets, was most recently the Gardenviews home and garden store. The building opened in 1940 as a Gulf Oil gas station and in later years served as a Sunoco station, a Chrysler dealership and a dry cleaner.

Designed by architect Ron Rea of Ron & Roman architects in Birmingham, the interior features high ceilings, white walls and contrasting black trim. Pairs of sewn-together blue jeans cover the backs of booths. And the bar's chandelier is made from the wheel and tire of an antique car with four attached headlamps from a 1930 Model A.

The highlight of the space is a colorful 28-by-7-foot mural visible from both the bar and dining room. Painted by Detroit artist Darcel Deneau, one end of the scene shows Woodward Avenue and the GM building in downtown Detroit at night; the rounded middle area depicts the Gulf service station in 1940 at midday; and the other end shows downtown Northville in early morning. Bageris says Deneau painted the scene in 20-foot sections on canvas in her garage.

In summer, outdoor dining will be available for 55 guests. A separate banquet space called Jack's Garage, displaying a restored 1930 Ford Model A, can accommodate up to 80.

The restaurant had been scheduled to open around Labor Day but work was delayed by state-required environmental cleanups of the soil, said Bageris, who previously was general manager and COO of Dearborn Country Club.

Garage is owned by Mark and Bill Evasic, owners of Master Automatic, a precision machine shop in Plymouth. Steve Siekierzynski, previously of Assaggi Bistro in Ferndale, is the chef.

For now, Garage is serving only dinner; lunch will be added when staffing levels can accommodate it. Hours are 5-10 p.m. Monday-Thursday, 5-11 p.m. Friday-Saturday and 5-8 p.m. Sunday. (202 W. Main; 248-924-3367 and www.garagenorthville.com)

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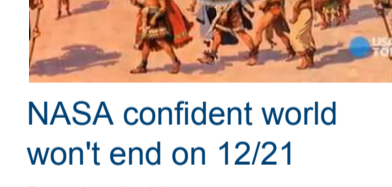
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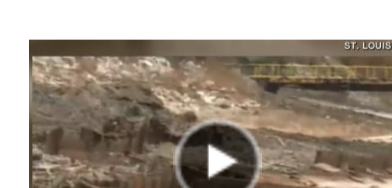
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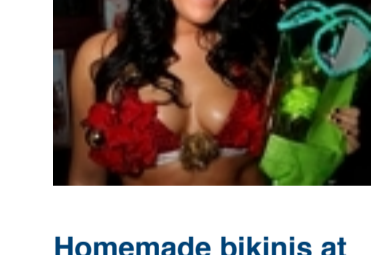
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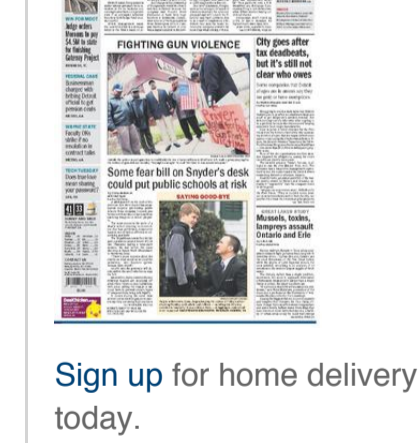
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