Silicon Valley (at least how we at ESV define it) covers two counties with hundreds of neighborhoods, thousands of square miles and almost 3 million people. Silicon Valley has more people than many states and its economy is larger than most countries. So with everything we have here, you might expect that there are “hidden gems” scattered all over the valley. And, indeed, there are thousands of these local hidden gems: markets, restaurants, farms, cafes, butchers, roasters, brewers, artists, gardeners, bakers and distillers. Now you just need to find them. We can help.
And if you happen to be in the Willows neighborhood of Menlo Park (or anywhere nearby), you can discover one of these hidden gems at Cafe Zoe, on the corner of Gilbert and Menalto. At first glance Cafe Zoe looks like a small coffee shop. And it is. But Cafe Zoe is a truly local coffee shop and that makes all the difference. The welcoming interior is covered with local news, postings and business cards, the walls are covered with art (for sale) from local artists, local crafts and jewelry. (You might even find a copy of Edible Silicon Valley). And many Friday nights local musicians perform for a local crowd, a very pleasant way to end the week.

But most people still go to Cafe Zoe for the coffee, and Cafe Zoe makes a very tasty cup using coffees from local roasters Barefoot (from Campbell) for their espresso coffees and Connoisseur (Redwood City) for their drip coffees. As owner Kathleen Daly notes, “I wanted Cafe Zoe to be a truly local business so we always try to use local suppliers.” And in keeping with a local theme, Daly even gets her milk delivered from Michael the Milkman, a local delivery service. Cafe Zoe does a strong business for breakfast and lunch, serving soups, salads, panini and sandwiches. Cafe Zoe also provides catered meals to local businesses.
Daly launched Cafe Zoe five years ago. After a career in medical device marketing, she was looking for a change. At first she looked for space in Palo Alto, but when she found the small Menalto neighborhood in the Willows “it just felt right, I knew I wanted to be here.” And five years later Cafe Zoe is truly a fixture in the community, with a legion of loyal local customers. But that doesn’t mean visitors aren’t welcome, Daly and her staff offer a friendly face and welcome smile to every customer. And Daly is very happy to discuss the local art on display, art from local portrait artist Massimo Mazzon and a series of works from the community at Abilities United cover the walls.

So if you are in the neighborhood, or want to take a bike ride to a quiet and relaxing spot, a trip to Cafe Zoe may be in order. A smile, a good cup of coffee, art, music and some relaxation are always worth the trip.

Cafe Zoe is located at 1929 Menalto Ave, in Menlo Park. Free Wifi available. Website with hours, menu and info on art and music here.