

Atlanta's Finest Dining

A Review of Atlanta's Finest Restaurants, Chefs and Culinary Happenings™

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Covering Atlanta's Sustainable Dining, Farming and Good Culinary Practices

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MY DAILY THREAD

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Prosciutto Flat bread from Pacci

[editorial]



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CASUAL DINING

WEST EGG CAFÉ

by Mariam Qureshi

Newly relocated to the White Provisions Residences development, an area once part of the city's meat packing district, the West Egg Café is only a stone's throw away from its original location, an old industrial building left, intentionally, architecturally raw. "We tried to carry over a lot of references to our original space and the industrial character of the surrounding neighborhood," describes proprietor Jennifer Johnson.

The fresh space exudes the same comfortable, unfussy atmosphere loyal patrons come to expect. With a working photo booth tucked in a corner and a relaxed couch beneath a shelf of dog-eared paperbacks, the family and student-friendly restaurant has expanded to include a distinctly Southern-themed dinner menu. "Ben and I always envisioned West Egg as one of those places, like a coffeehouse or a European cafe, that is always available to its community, whether it's a cup of coffee in the morning through to a glass of wine in the evening," Johnson explains. "With all the growth in the neighborhood since we first opened six years ago, we felt it was time to expand into evening hours by adding dinner and bar service."

Along with Executive Chef Patric Bell, owners Jennifer and Ben Johnson have created a menu centered upon comfort foods, such as versatile and beloved eggs (served just as you like them), black bean cakes, pimento cheese and bacon omelets, and buttermilk pancakes served with spiced honey butter. A graduate of the Art Institute of Atlanta, Bell joined the West Egg team in 2004, having spent time at Murphy's and the Flying Biscuit. In addition to his duties at West Egg, he teaches classes at the Cook's Warehouse (Midtown and Decatur locations) and the Peach Palette in Fort Valley. His regional Southern influences spring from his childhood in Alabama and Tennessee, where respect for the land came firsthand during hunting and fishing trips, as well as culinary prompts from his Mexican grandmother.

"I started cooking because my mother was a terrible cook, so I knew early on that food could be much more than something to fill your belly," shares good-humored Bell. "Its preparation can be therapeutic; eating a truly good



Coca Cola Cupcake



House made Banana Pudding



Picnic Plate



Seasonal Stewed Vegetables with Grit Cakes

...eating a truly good meal can mend a mood better than any narcotic.

crowned with cob-smoked (not Applewood) bacon jam. Next is Bell's pig and grits entrée; the cider-braised pork screams succulence before fork tines pierce the auburn bark, which is a strong union of sweet and savory. Enhanced by a subtle crunch, the outer meat's peppery smokiness retells a flavorful life in the pit. Underneath, a mound of grits offers a creamy stabilizer without any of the typical characteristics of its granular namesake. These grits are

meal can mend a mood better than any narcotic. Sometimes a bad meal can be inspiration. Or, in the case of the fried egg sandwich, an important hangover cure."

Our meal begins with the Picnic Plate—a colorful dish of ham gleaming with a coca-cola glaze, a scoop of sharp pimento cheese and deviled eggs

smooth, velvety, and infused with the shoulder's vinegary goodness. The Chicken and Dumpling Potpie is as heartwarming as Sunday lunch with close friends. When broken, the buttery pastry erupts with gravy thick and flavorful from tender chicken, sweet peas and carrots. The country captain chicken dish is a delightful take on curried chicken. Sitting atop delicate coconut rice with

toasted almonds and plump raisins, the spiced tomato base carries a gentle, but noticeable, heat. The braised short ribs are simply wonderful. Marinated in wine for 24 hours, the meat falls off the bone in tender shreds allowing for its piquant, fennel-infused tang to weave amongst the rich potatoes and parsnips.

As Chef Bell's specialty lies amid flour and sugar, his desserts will impress any sweet tooth devotee. His cupcakes come dressed in coca-cola or red velvet flavors, moist and fresh from the oven. They are the perfect accompaniment to a cup of Batdorf & Bronson coffee or with a glass of wine. With its lush texture, the banana pudding's chill spreads on the tongue before sliding down the throat like silk chiffon. When your spoon scrapes the last mouthful from the Mason jar, no one will blame you for requesting a second helping.

Due to its consistently good recipes and service, the casual West Egg Café remains an admired eatery, offering breakfast items throughout the day, along with lunch sandwiches like the popular Fried Green Tomato Wrap or BLT. Judging by the dinner menu, it will continue to deliver what hungry Atlantans crave: a nourishing taste of home.

The West Egg Café is located at 1100 Howell Mill Road in Atlanta. Contact 404-872-3973 or visit www.westeggcafe.com for more information.