



Duck pate with satsuma orange, parsley and celery leaves

Meat and Greet

by Wendell Brock | Photography by Angie Moser | The Atlantan magazine
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Back in 2006, Micah Willix became a national player when *Esquire* named Midtown's Ecco one of the year's best new restaurants. Five years later, the executive chef moved uptown—to the highly promising but short-lived Latitude Food & Drink at Phipps Plaza.

After keeping a rather low profile and working mostly as a consultant, Willix now brings his fetching, contemporary touch to Community Smith, the meat-centric new restaurant that has sprung up in the site of the old Briza on West

Peachtree Street.

Raised a vegan in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Willix has become a proud purveyor of all things protein. As sly and stealthy as the fox that jumps across the Community Smith logo, he applies his protean protein touch to everything from oxtail and duck to lamb and squid. Though the restaurant claims to be a "modern meatery," it's just as conversant in the language of turnips and carrots as beef and pork.

As you might guess from the name, Community Smith wants to be a neighborhood haunt. (The "Smith" part is a reference to the hand-forged nature of the provisions.) Still, the restaurant happens to sit beside a busy Midtown hotel, so it only makes sense that it serves everything from breakfast to late-night cocktails.

The space has been beautifully designed by the Brooklyn-based firm *crème* with curvaceous leather booths, marble tabletops, freshly whitewashed walls and luxurious hardwoods.

The beverage program is concise and well-chosen: a handful of crafted cocktails; a strong selection of (mostly local) beers; and a wine list that speaks to the bold, lusty flavors of the menu. The Old Fashioned cleverly substitutes blood orange for the traditional muddled orange, while the Mezarita is basically a margarita that marries mezcal, blanco tequila and Grand Marnier to smoky, delicious effect.

Virtually everything on the menu is meant to be shared. Starters, mains and sides are proportioned so that you can build a very generous but not over-the-top repast by choosing a couple of each.

We followed the lead of Jana, our helpful and delightful server, and ordered the duck pate—a surprisingly delicate dish punched up with hints of satsuma oranges and a mound of celery and parsley leaves—and the oxtail toast, mounds of unctuous shredded meat drizzled with piri piri sauce, sprinkled with aged gouda and served on a massive baguette plank. These rich, tantalizing bites were a fabulous start to the meal. Yet we also managed to work in an appetizer of short ribs, paired with smashed parsnips and doused in a richly burnished, bourbon-stoked brown gravy. All so good.

We then moved on to salmon-like steelhead trout, salt rubbed, perfectly roasted and scattered with roasted almonds and radishes. Just as good, if a bit chewy, was the beef bavette, flank steak splashed with chimichurri-style herb salsa, big chunks of salty white cheese and cilantro leaves. The dishes paired nicely with sides of quinoa (tossed with sultanas and bits of fried onion) and cauliflower (roasted with pickled mustard seeds and turmeric).

The kind of chef who does it all, Willix keeps the dessert offerings short but very sweet. You might try the banana sticky toffee with ginger-snap crumble and mascarpone, or the bourbon-chocolate torte with brown-butter ice cream and caramelized pecans. We couldn't resist the popcorn ice cream. That's right. Popcorn-infused ice cream, with hints of salt, butter and corn, was dished onto a broken blondie bar, doused with housemade chocolate sauce and sprinkled with fleur de sel. This dessert was beyond clever and off-the-charts addictive. Popcorn and a moo-vie, if you will.

So here's the deal: Already Community Smith brings a sense of warmth and camaraderie to a frenetic urban corridor. It's the kind of spot where you can drop in for a quick bite or a long, thoughtfully curated dinner. You might bump into folks who live nearby, or folks who are just passing through town for the night. Midtown is where people go for the excitement of theater and museums, dance clubs and live music. But sometimes finding a good meal is more of a challenge than it ought to be. Thankfully, Community Smith is here to help.

Community Smith

866 W. Peachtree St. NW
678.412.2402

Hours: Breakfast, 6:30-11am daily; lunch, 11am-2pm daily; dinner, Sun.-Thu. 5-10pm; Fri.-Sat., 5-11pm

Prices: Breakfast, \$4-\$13; lunch, \$7-\$18; dinner, \$8-\$19

Parking and Other Particulars: Community Smith shares parking with the Renaissance Atlanta Midtown Hotel next door. Valets will park your car, or you may park on the street. Unlike its predecessor, Briza, Community Smith is not connected directly to the hotel. The bar pours until 1am on Fridays and Saturdays.

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