

Bidwell Restaurant Opens in Union Market Today

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Lobster tacos, escargots, or Swedish meatballs? You can find them all at Union Market's new "roof to table" restaurant Bidwell, which opens today from New York chef John Mooney.

Bidwell follows the same mantra as Mooney's New York restaurant Bell Book & Candle. Literally. It's copy and pasted, word for word, from one menu to the other: "At _____, we are dedicated to responsible procurement. We believe in sustainability and do our best to bring only the finest product from as close to home as possible. 60 percent of our organically grown produce comes from our roof top aeroponic system."

Despite the menu's text, Bidwell won't actually begin growing organic herbs and produce in an aeroponic garden on the rooftop of Union Market until this spring. The restaurant also still lists—inaccurately for now—dishes like "crisp pork belly and rooftop arugula" on the opening menu.

While nothing's growing overhead yet, Mooney is taking advantage of his Union Market neighbors, using some meats from Harvey's Market, cheeses from Righteous Cheese, and gelato from Dolcezza, whose new factory is just around the corner.

The clear local/sustainable/organic theme is clear, but the menu is all over the place (or, euphemistically, "eclectic"), skipping from fluke sashimi to fish and chips to housemade burrata to venison black bean chili. (Check it out for yourself below.)

"There's subtleties in a lot of things I like to do, but it's pretty much American food," Mooney says. "It's basically just a collection of things that I like and places I've been and product I like."



One of Mooney's signature dishes is a "gin and tonic" wild salmon that's cured with juniper and lime, grilled, and served with caramelized cauliflower and a lime emulsion. He says another favorite is the paddy melt-style Bidwell Burger with grilled onions, vintage cheddar, and "old school" Thousand Island dressing. (The Bidwell Burger is the same as New York's BBC Burger.)

Like many of the vendors at Union Market, Mooney has a personal connection to Edens director of culinary strategy Richie Brandenburg, who's recruited all of Union Market's shops and restaurants. Mooney was actually Brandenburg's boss at now-closed Red Sage, and the two have remained friends over the years. Mooney also worked at Raku before moving to New York.

Mooney says he'll be working full-time from D.C. over the coming months, although his home base will remain New York. The restaurant is just open for dinner now, but expect brunch to follow in a week or two.