

Love, Beer, and Strippers

Insatiable

BY JONATHAN BARDZIK

Chef John Mooney admitted on a cold January night that it would be a couple more months before his first harvest from their planned rooftop garden at Union Market, but Bidwell's (www.bidwelldc.com, 1309 5th St. NE) menu already relies heavily on locally sourced ingredients. Union Market now has a full-service, sit-down restaurant.

The menu, taking many cues and its motto, "responsibly sourced," from Mooney's West Village restaurant, Bell, Book and Candle, ranges from American comfort to new American bistro. Swedish meatballs are fresh out of a 1970s party crockpot, rich and comforting, slathered in gravy. The classic patty melt tops a perfectly cooked burger with rich, sweet, grilled onions, aged cheddar, and house-made thousand island on toasted rye bread.

With raclette and white truffle oil, topped with a delicate poached egg, Bidwell may have the best grilled cheese I've ever tasted, never losing the crisp, buttered, grilled bread and melty cheese that makes this true American comfort food.

The marinated fluke sashimi is beautifully bright with fresh mint, sparkling pink grapefruit, and the bright heat of jalapeño: spring on a plate. The lobster tacos show off sweet seafood paired with a creamy avocado and tomatillo salsa. Cozying up to the bar, I warmed my insides gently with the glogg – spiced wine with rum and brandy – while the Feel the Heat's gin and jalapeño offered bolder heat.

The last bite we had that evening was a lamb chop: high-quality meat, perfectly seasoned and cooked. No tricks, just really good. If they ever need a new motto, it's one Chef Mooney can certainly claim.



Bidwell's spacious bar will feature local craft beers, an American and international wine selection and signature cocktails. Photo: Jeff Martin



Chef John Mooney's Bidwell brings a full-service restaurant and bar to Union Market. Photo: Jeff Martin



Alba Osteria's perfectly crisp eggplant, potato, and cauliflower fritters reveal creamy, rich interiors.



Bidwell serves what may well be the best grilled cheese ever! Raclette and white truffle between crisp, buttered bread under a delicate poached egg. Photo: Bidwell