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New Restaurant in Union Market in DC: Dinner at Bidwell

One of the great blogging perks that I've mentioned before is being invited to try out new restaurants. Who would ever say no to that? Last night I had a chance to have dinner at the newly opened Bidwell located at Union Market and take my friend Cecilia as my +1.

If you've never been to Union Market, GO! It is full of casual dining options, produce stands, great lifestyle store and even a place to sharpen your knives.

Bidwell, however, is the first full service sit down restaurant that is not only open for lunch and brunch, but also for late night dinner. It has minimalistic dark décor, beautiful silver toned silverware and white plates that make the food the star of the show.

A few facts {from Union Market website}

Chef John Mooney's restaurant gets its name from General John Bidwell, an Army general in the 1800's and founder of Chico, California. An avid farmer, he developed the Bidwell heirloom melon, a gold medal winning flour, and California's first commercial raisin crop.

The Bidwell menu features Chef John Mooney's signature dishes with Southern flair.

Mooney has traveled the world as a chef working at DC's Red Sage and Raku; W Hotel New York's flagship restaurant Heartbeat; as well as India's first organic restaurant, PURE by Michel Nischan. He also brought aeroponic practices to his New York City West Village restaurant Bell, Book & Candle, where he was named a 2011 StarChefs.com Rising Star Sustainability Chef.

I cannot wait to check out the rooftop garden that Bidwell is planning to build in March, but for now let me share a few of my favorite dishes from last night's dinner.

Cecilia and I got to sit at the chef's table overlooking the open kitchen. I was amazed at how smoothly the kitchen ran: no yelling, no running, no fires. Everyone was in their element doing their job. The manager, Scott, guided us through the menu and we also had each dish explained by Inez who was in charge of the kitchen.

The simply described Lobster Taco with avocado-tomatillo salsa was served warm and had a great amount of kick to it that was balanced by the cheese inside the dish {lower left corner}. Surprisingly, despite the heat in the dish, the sweetness of the lobster wasn't lost. And that avocado-tomatillo salsa? I could eat a bowl of it!

Next came the Pear Salad with pecans, Point Reyes blue, raisins and mixed greens. Add a poached egg, and it'd be a perfect lunch.



The Marinated Fluke Sashimi {bottom right} was a beautiful dish of sliced white fish with mint, chives and cilantro with a light citrus dressing and fresh grapefruits.

Bidwell has a meat slicer from the 1920s! It's incredible that such an old machine is still functioning and produces such beautiful results. I think Cecilia wanted to take it home ;)

The meat platter {upper right corner on the photo below} included Bentons Country Ham, La Quercia Heirloom Prociutto and Finocchiona. My favorite was the prociutto which was thicker than the ones I usually eat and had a great smoky flavor. We also had a few cheeses.

And who would say no to oysters? The thing that impressed both Cecilia and me about oysters in Bidwell was how clean and expertly shucked they were. I could have eaten a few dozen: will need to come back.

The two meat dishes that I liked the most were the Grilled Lamb Chops and Crisp Pork Belly. I ate the lamb chop like a lollipop: it was so tender it did not require a knife.

When the pork belly was served, Cecilia and I thought it was fried tofu. It wasn't. I was surprised that the pork belly wasn't greasy or fatty. It had great flavor and went well with a side of apples, shaved fennel and sweet onion.

This was a superb dinner. I cannot wait to come back for brunch and try Housemade Burrata and Raclette Grilled Cheese with sourdough and slow poached egg.

Thank you so much to Bidwell and Gail Schoenberg Public Relations for a wonderful dining experience.

Disclosure: Cecilia and I were guests at Bidwell and our dinner was complimentary. We left a tip. All opinions are my own.

