



## A Visit to Bidwell for Brunch & Rooftop Garden Exploration

Posted By Jake Emen on Apr 22, 2015



Chef John Mooney has brought something entirely different to the D.C. dining scene with Bidwell, located at Union Market. There's farm to table dining, and many a restaurateur has tried to jump onto that bandwagon for the feel good vibes and a few Instagram, buzz-worthy photos, whether or not they're in it for the right reasons or truly upholding the mission statement.

At Bidwell though, opened in 2014 and serving as the main restaurant anchor to the bustling marketplace, farm to table is actually rooftop garden to plate. The produce being showcased in each seasonally-inspired, freshly-prepared dish that you're enjoying is basking in the same sunlight you are, right above your very head on a shining D.C. weekend afternoon, with another long winter falling farther into distant memory.

Bidwell is named in homage to 1800s Army General and one-time Presidential candidate John Bidwell. He also happened to be a farmer who developed the Bidwell heirloom melon, and California's first commercial raisin crop. His penchant for innovation has been transformed here into a dynamic aeroponic planter garden atop Union Market itself. It's something which Mooney also puts into practice at Bell, Book & Candle, his West Village restaurant in Manhattan.

Aeroponics is the process of growing plants in an air or mist environment without the use of soil. Bidwell makes use of a Future Growing vertical aeroponic Tower Garden, with rows and rows of planters producing seasonal, organic fruits, vegetables and herbs. Viewing the garden from a distance, with the all-white roof and planters, you'd be forgiven if you thought you were looking at an arid desert with some sort of strange species of cacti taking root. Upon closer inspection though, you'll find flourishing life emerging around every corner and peeking out of every nook.

Currently, upwards of 60 to 70% of all produce at Bidwell is grown right on the rooftop. There are herbs like sage, chives, cilantro, parsley, basil and rosemary; tomatoes and tomatillos; arugula, lettuce

and greens; peppers, eggplant and much more. By summertime, Bidwell could be approaching a full 100%, offering an unparalleled, uber-local and sustainable concept.

Such a concept is great on its own, but in practice wouldn't be worth much unless the food delivered on its own merits, too. Mooney's cuisine certainly doesn't disappoint here. He allows those fresh ingredients to shine and delivers an array of well thought out, vibrant dishes.

For brunch, find everything from oysters to charcuterie, small plates to soups, and both breakfast and lunch mains. Don't miss the beautiful, creamy house-made burrata, a dish built to share that you may not want to part with. A marinated fluke sashimi plate offers clean, crisp and bright flavors, punctuated by the freshly grown mint. Healthy fare ranges from house-made granola and yogurt, to a number of seasonal salads.

But since when was brunch about being healthy? Consider the indulgent raclette grilled cheese, with white truffle, sourdough bread and a wonderfully slow poached egg, ready to burst. Other go-big brunch choices include brioche French toast with bananas, toasted almonds, and goats milk caramel; steak & eggs Benedict, a pairing of two of your favorite breakfast choices with grilled hanger steak and poached eggs served with Bearnaise sauce; or the Bidwell burrito, featuring scrambled eggs, chorizo, drunken beans, jack cheese and salsa verde.

A la carte cocktails are available, and there are also bottomless brunch mimosas and bloody Marys for \$20 per person. Refills are fast and service is friendly. If the sun is shining, snag an outdoor table, otherwise post up by the bar and enjoy a typically loud and busy Union Market afternoon. Be sure to ask for your own rooftop garden tour. Learn more at [BidwellDC.com](http://BidwellDC.com).