



WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2008

BREAKING THE BUCKHEAD MOLD

I travel on my own almost constantly these days; traversing the country working everywhere from small towns to large cities.



During these trips I usually end the day having dinner in a local bar, grill, bistro, or in many cases - a hotel dining room by myself. Since I usually do not want to take up an entire table, the bar seems to be the natural place to dine. It certainly beats sitting at an empty table alone. As a result, I have become quite an authority on dining at the bar. Unfortunately, many bartenders have difficulty with my choice; they seem to think that the bar is intended for drinking and not for dining. As a result, I often feel that both my meals and the service from the bar get a little bit “short changed”.

I recently had a refreshing break from this routine at a restaurant in Atlanta called JCT. Kitchen and Bar (said like “Junction” Kitchen and Bar). The restaurant is situated in a former meat packing district which is part of the Westside Urban Market, located in the Western Atlanta suburbs down by the train tracks. JCT Kitchen and Bar has great live music on Fridays and Saturdays, indoor and outdoor seating, and features extraordinary views of the Atlanta skyline up on the roof.

The best thing of all, however, is their food. Their menu is not the standard parade of burgers, wings and things that you get at many

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local bistros. JCT. blends a French bistro sensibility with the flavors and textures of the old favorites of modern Southern cuisine. Menu items include such things as a wonderful grilled cheese sampler with caramelized onions and wild mushrooms, aged and blue vein cheeses. They also serve an airy "cloud like" potato gnocchi with an intense veal jus and fresh herbs. Another plate consists of wafer thin country ham with fiery mustards, assorted "little pickles", and rustic breads. If you'd like to break the conventional Atlanta Buckhead mold, check out JCTkitchen.com.

Photograph by *Gail Des Jardin*

posted by Walter Scheib @ 6:37 PM

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2008

BOISE SPIRITS



It's not often that you can pull the curtains away from your hotel window and see a beautiful spring where the trout actually dapple on the water's surface. I'm here in Boise, Idaho at the foot of the snow covered Rocky Mountains. It's easy to see why folks are so drawn to this part of the country; it's simply stunning.

Boise is also home to America's first distillery restaurant pub,

Bardenay. The thing that makes Bardenay so unique is the fact that they produce their own vodka, rum and gin in these gorgeous 18 ft. copper stills. Their vodka is as good as any standard vodka. The gin is crafted in the London dry style. It's crystal clear with wonderful light junipery overtones which give it a much cleaner taste than the less sullen flavored commercial gins out there. They also make a pretty decent medium body rum. There is a delightful hint of gingered perfume that emanates from the rum. Bardenay's rum is distilled with fresh ginger.

While Bardenay's distinctive products aren't available online, they are available in some liquor stores. I had a great time learning to appreciate some of the finer points of small batch vodka, gin and rum making. If you get a chance take a look at their website. It's worth a look bardenay.com.

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Bardenay
Copper Still
Photographs
by Mark
Tupinski,
photographer



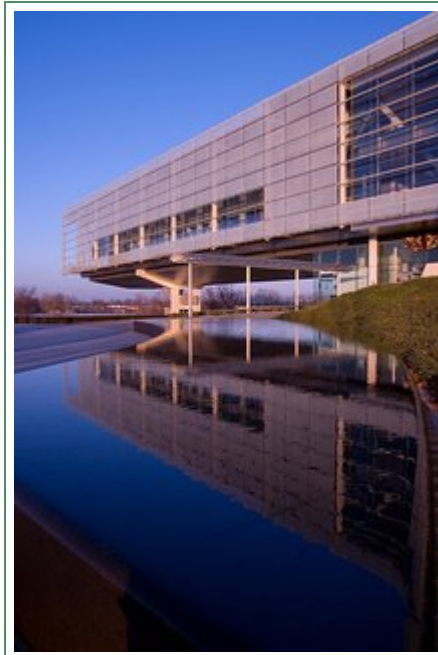
posted by Walter Scheib @ 10:48 PM

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2008

JUST LIKE OLD TIMES

A recent invitation to host an event at the William J. Clinton Presidential Library in Arkansas came as a most welcome request. I had the opportunity work with my old friend Chef Marti Mongiello. Marti is the former Executive Chef at Camp David. Marti and I worked together for several years during the Clinton Administration. Together, we produced a White House-Camp David tasting menu.

While at the Clinton Library I had a wonderful opportunity



to give visitors a glimpse into the White House Kitchen through stories and

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remembrances. I recounted Presidential favorites along with doing a cooking demonstration. The house was full and the guests seemed to enjoy the tasting. Jennnifer Clark and her staff at Café 42 deserve much of the credit for the beautiful food and special evening.

The following day I was interviewed on KATV 7 where I did a 5 minute cooking demo. Afterwards I was off to the River Market District to check out local foods and artisanal products. Finally, I completed my reunion with a very successful booksigning at the Clinton Museum Store.

*Top Right:
Library
Photo
courtesy
of Stuart
Seeger.*



posted by Walter Scheib @ 5:42 AM

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2008

CHICAGO - Feasts and Flights

I'm here at O'Hare, all snowed in and nowhere to go.

I think I understand what caused one frustrated airport customer to say, "I would rather spend a week in hell than a day at this airport. If there's one drop of rain, or a cloud visible on the horizon, everything just stops" (flightstats.com). I can't say that I totally agree with this statement, but I have to admit - the sarcastic humor helps battle the Famous O'hare Delayed Flight Blues. I think it's going to be a long lay over.

My time in Chicago included a dinner presentation that I gave at the InterContinental Hotel hosted by the Associated Luxury hotels International and Leading Speakers Authorities, Inc. (my speaker's bureau). This private dinner took place in an exquisite dining room called the King Arthur Room. As the name suggests, the room was designed with a distinct medieval feel. The entryway is guarded by painted uniformed knights and the dinner itself was served on a 60 foot long banquet table that is surrounded by ornate stained glass and beautifully carved wooden beams. It's definitely one of the most unique venues I've worked in for quite a while.

The InterContinental Hotel has another kind of dining gem that they describe as a wine tasting experience that engages all your senses. ENO is a trendy tasting hot spot where patrons can indulge in flights

of fanciful wine, chocolate and cheese pairings either by their own taste or with the help from an extremely



knowledgeable, and patient, service staff. There are 15 different flights in each of the different "food groups". During my stay of several days here in Chicago I had the opportunity to try a great variety of pairings. I strongly recommend ENO if you are in Chicago. Give it a try either as a pre or post dinner option - or if you are really daring, spend a whole meal there. ENO is a wonderful and unique concept. Check out their menu at www.enowinerooms.com

posted by Walter Scheib @ 10:43 PM

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