

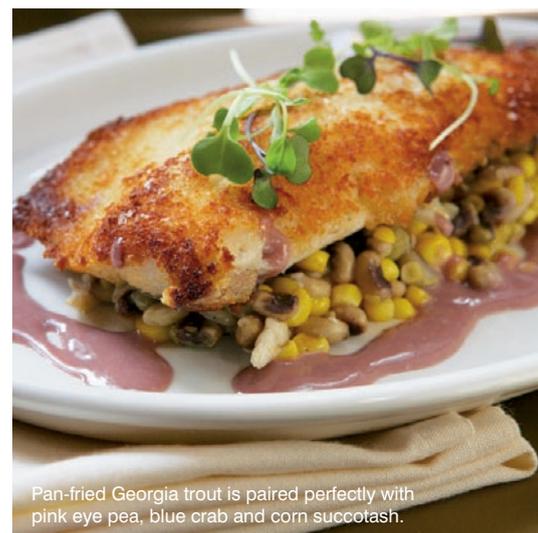
# culture



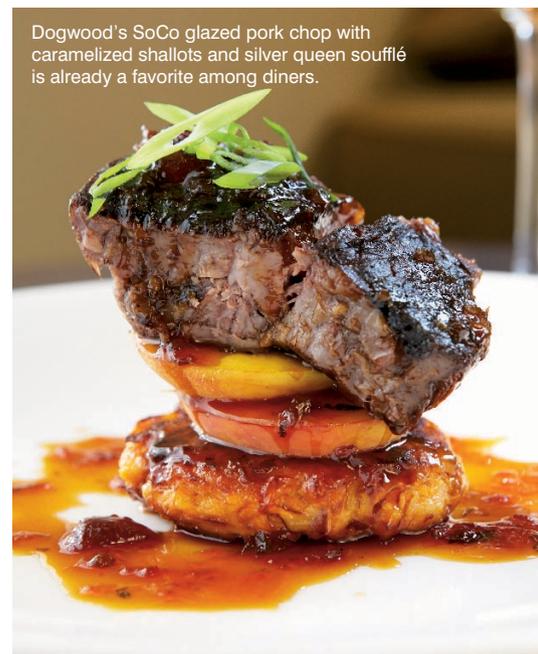
Dogwood's two-story elegant dining room is washed with warm shades of brown, moss green and paprika, and features dramatic black-and-white photos of dogwood blooms.



The sweet gem lettuce salad features crispy pancetta, goat cheese, egg salad and sweet sherry vinaigrette.



Pan-fried Georgia trout is paired perfectly with pink eye pea, blue crab and corn succotash.



Dogwood's SoCo glazed pork chop with caramelized shallots and silver queen soufflé is already a favorite among diners.

# Southern Comfort

Downtown's new restaurant Dogwood had me at "grits bar."

It didn't take much to sell me on Dogwood, the new Southern cuisine restaurant from executive chef and co-owner Shane Touhy and co-owner Scott Black. In fact, it was just two words that had me eagerly anticipating this restaurant's opening: grits bar.

Naturally, I was a little disappointed before my first dinner when I realized there would be no actual "bar" chock full of glorious grits and all the toppings. I mean, what Southern foodie wouldn't be a little let down knowing they wouldn't be piling their plate from a build-your-own grits buffet?

But once I stepped foot inside the door of the elegant space on the ground floor of The Reynolds on Peachtree condominium building, it took just a split second for me to realize why there'd be no grits bar here. The two-story restaurant is intimate and sophisticated, with a grand staircase that leads from the lower level to the upper mezzanine where the best tables overlook the main dining room. Soaring ceilings, exposed wood beams and elegant lighting

give the space a dramatic vibe that's softened by shades of moss green, brown and paprika. The only "bar" suitable for the décor here is the contemporary one stocked with top-shelf spirits and overlooking Peachtree.

Of course, I was impressed with the space, but hoped to be blown away by the food—and I was. My disappointment from the missing grits bar melted away when I had the first bites of the grits dishes on the menu. The servings are small—just a few bites—so you can order more than one and share. I decided to pass on the fried oyster with spicy hollandaise and opted instead for the low country shrimp and grits along with ham and pimiento cheese. Both were warm and delightfully creamy, and I could have made a full meal of either. I was equally pleased with my local greens salad with shaved carrots, cucumber, tomatoes, herb mustard dressing and additional "Clemson" blue cheese topping. The tangy blue cheese added another layer of flavor to the otherwise simple salad. The eggplant, tomato and goat cheese blintz appetizer really caught my attention; however, it fell a tad short on flavor, and I reluctantly reached for the salt. Next time I'll go for another more traditional Southern choice like the fried green tomatoes with shrimp and Creole remoulade.

Fortunately, the only trouble I had with the entrées was choosing one to order. I debated on the smoked short ribs, the SoCo glazed pork chop and the grilled Atlantic salmon with "BLT" sauce, but ended up choosing the pan-fried Georgia trout with pink eye pea, blue crab and corn succotash, and the grilled tenderloin of beef. The trout was crispy and brown on the outside, but flaky and moist inside. And the sweet corn and crab in the succotash were so simple and flavorful, the dish left me wondering why I don't cook this Southern staple more at home. And, even though the tenderloin entrée didn't necessarily have any kind of Southern twist, it was tender, juicy and perfectly pink inside—as requested—and I'd definitely order this cut of beef again.

For dessert, I struggled hard to finish the enormous chocolate terrine, which was absolutely my idea of death by chocolate. It was exceptionally rich—almost fudge-like—and left me yearning for that second stomach that would come in handy for occasions like this. Dare I say next time I'll have to skip the grits to save room for dessert? Doubtful. Very, very doubtful. —SARAH GLEIM

## One-on-one with Executive Chef Shane Touhy

### What chef has been the biggest influence on your culinary career?

Chef James Burns of J. Bistro in Charleston, S.C. He was my mentor.

### What is the one ingredient you can't live without?

Cheese. Cheese makes anything better. Do I lie?

### What's the most unusual ingredient you've cooked with lately?

A whole suckling pig.

### What would we find in your refrigerator at home?

Wine, cheese, deli meat, sparkling water and Diet Coke.

### If you were going to invite us for dinner at your home, what

### would you be cooking?

More than likely, we would try dishes I was thinking about putting on my fall menu. How about seared scallops with dirty rice cakes and a chicken and oyster gumbo sauce?

### Name a cookbook you love.

"Frank Stitt's Southern Table: Recipes and Gracious Traditions from Highlands Bar and Grill."

### What do you think about the culinary scene in Atlanta?

We just opened at the end of July, so I hope it is booming and growing by leaps and bounds every day.

### Coke or Pepsi?

We are in Atlanta. Of course Coke.

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Open Monday through Saturday for lunch and dinner