

Grill Master

Farm Burger sets the bar high when it comes to beef.

I can't tell you how much I've anticipated the opening of Farm Burger in Decatur. I live in Decatur so when I saw the sign go up a few months ago, I knew right away it was going to be a big hit in my neck of the woods.

Farm Burger is a partnership between George Frangos and Jason Mann, and, trust me, both of these guys know their way around a restaurant. Mann is a partner in the restaurant Farm 255 in Athens and the director of two farm operations: Full Moon Farms and Moonshine Meats. Mann owns and operates the farms that produce all of Farm 255's meat and half of its vegetables.

Frangos, on the other hand, used to work with Atlanta-based Concentrics Restaurants (One. Midtown Kitchen, TWO Urban Licks, etc.); Savoy and Blue Ribbon Bakery, both in New York City; and Restaurant Nora in Washington, D.C. I wasn't kidding when I said they know their way around a restaurant.

So just a few weeks ago, and after almost a year of planning, Frangos and Mann opened the tiny spot (I think it can seat 50) just

next to Watershed and began serving up their menu of burgers, a slew of toppings and sides, and several beer and wine options. But what's so great about Farm Burger is nearly everything on the menu is local, including the beef, which comes from Mann's Athens farm, Moonshine Meats, where the cows are 100-percent grass-fed and never given hormones or antibiotics. And the beef is dry-aged and ground fresh on site in Decatur. So these burgers have got to be damn good, right?

Well, to directly quote one of my friends after she ate her first Farm Burger would make my article X-rated. But in a nutshell, when she took her first bite, she told me it gave her, well, you know. I felt like I was in a scene straight out of "When Harry Met Sally" except now I'm the one who'll have what she's having!

So finally I make it to Farm Burger. I love the organic design of the space—picnic tables of reclaimed wood are used for seating, and a huge menu hangs above an eight-seat counter where you place your order from a selection of "blackboard burgers" (creations like The Farm Burger, topped with grafton smoked white cheddar, caramelized onions and Farm Burger sauce; the Burger Banh Mi, their take on the Vietnamese sandwich; or build-your-own burgers). I decide to build it my own way and go with caramelized onions, roasted garlic, a little mayo (Duke's, my fave), lettuce, tomato and some Swiss cheese. I get it with a side of onion rings and wait as patiently as I possibly can.

And then it comes. I take a bite, and oh, my, god. It is *that* good. The bun is toasted on the griddle, but perhaps I've gone overboard on toppings because it's so messy I have no choice but to eat it with a fork, but I don't mind. The caramelized onions are cooked just right so they're sweet and pair nicely with the roasted garlic and Swiss cheese. All of it together goes so well with the beef that tastes so fresh. The patty is cooked a juicy medium and really is one of the best, albeit messiest, burgers I've had in a long while. The onion rings are cooked perfectly, too—not too much beer batter overpowering the flavor of the onion. I definitely recommend these as a side.

Of course, I'll be coming back—and frequently—to sample just about everything else on the menu here, including things like the house-cut potato fries, fried okra, sweet potato fries, caramelized onion dip, and even house-cured bacon and charcuterie. The only thing I'm pretty sure you won't see me order is the salad. I have nothing against a salad. I love them actually. And here they're locally sourced and organic, and I'm sure fabulous, but there's no way I'll be wasting my time (or stomach space) on leafy greens when the burgers taste this fantastic. —SARAH GLEIM

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The Banh Mi burger, Farm Burger's take on the Vietnamese sandwich, is topped with pickled carrots, daikon radish and onion, plus cilantro, jalapeños, pork pâté and salami.



FARM BURGER'S GREEN

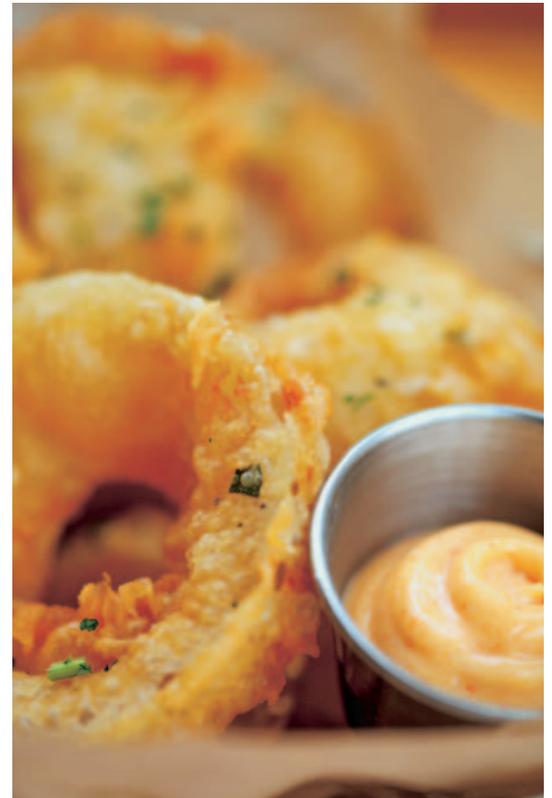
The architecture and building design utilized green and sustainable practices, including local, reclaimed materials.

All to-go items are served in biodegradable, compostable packaging.

Vegetable waste is returned to the farms and composted in Full Moon's fields or fed straight to Moonshine's pigs.

Fryer oil is recycled into biodiesel fuel for cars.

Farm Burger will strive to eventually be a "zero-waste" facility.



Clockwise from top: Farm Burger's interior is simple and rustic, and features local reclaimed wood, concrete floors and picnic tables for seating. The beer-battered onion rings are crispy and light, and served with a smoked paprika mayo. Fresh pickled veggies make a great addition to burgers and fries. Sweet potato fries pair perfectly with the No. 4 Blackboard Burger, which is topped with pickled beets, green garlic, arugula, lara chenal goat cheese and mayo.