

Behind the Scenes at Community Smith

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Community Smith, Atlanta's newest contemporary meatery, opens Wednesday, January 28 in Midtown. Set at the corner of Abercrombie and West Peachtree Streets, the restaurant aims to be a local neighborhood spot, with an approachable menu and drink list. Chef Micah Willex, formerly a chef consultant and chef at Ecco, is at the helm of the kitchen, and here he shares more about his latest concept.

Tell us the meaning behind the restaurant's name, Community Smith.

I want this restaurant to be a neighborhood place, and "community" was fitting. A smith is craftsman, so the name means to forge together a community.

With that community approach, what can we expect to find on the menu?

We want the menu to be very approachable. I don't want to do things that are esoteric. We'll have a solid menu each week, but rotate through a few items on a weekly basis, that way regulars will have the opportunity to try something new, but diners can still find familiar items.

How has the contemporary "meatery" developed today?

I've never been a fan of feedlots and big commercial food conglomerates, and today chefs have to be flexible to get the highest quality products. Our goal is to make the menu protein-centric, and we are properly sourcing meats from both local farms such as White Oak Pastures, and small regional farms such as North Carolina's Brasstown Farms. Being landlocked, we won't have local seafood but it will be sustainably sourced and green certified.

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What's an example of some of the staple dishes?

- Porchetta with rosemary elote, sweet peppers & aioli.
- Grilled steelhead trout with watermelon radishes
- Beef Bavette, herb salsa, mushroom, house-made chorizo & queso
- Roasted Cauliflower with pickled mustard & turmeric

We heard you grew up vegetarian- that's quite a stretch from your meat-centric restaurant now.

Yes, I was raised vegetarian. There wasn't any rhyme or reason- we didn't do it for health or ethical reasons. So in my teens I started eating meat, and now my diet is balanced. My whole family is still vegetarian and vegan.

What can we expect from the bar program?

The bar program focuses on classic cocktails. We're taking a step back from mixology and step toward classic spirit cocktails. We won't have a mixologist, everyone at the bar will collaborate on the drink list. For the wine list, we have 50 wines on the list and none are more than \$75 per bottle. We are going for approachable wines from smaller producers.



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