Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Twin Cities culinary scene: Fig + Farro

R. Daniel Foster · Wednesday, October 24th, 2018

Last week's post outlined the standout food scene in the Twin Cities, which includes food trucks, donut shops (Glam Doll – yum), and at least one donut truck. St. Paul's Joan's in the Park was featured, but the real news was over on Grand Ave. where The Lexington has been remodeled after 78 years, re-opening last February.

Venturing across the Mississippi to Minneapolis (Esquire magazine terms the city "the food world's best-kept secret") we land at Fig + Farro in Uptown's Calhoun Square. This is a restaurant with a frank veggie 'tude, tempered by the realization that diners' taste habits can be hard to change.

Fig + Farro features folding wall windows facing Lake Street. Photo: courtesy of Fig + Farro

A restaurant with a climate change mission

The restaurant's website boldly proclaims Fig + Farro's "mission-based" goals: "We are climate change activists who are educating guests on the enormous carbon footprint that is created by livestock production."

Fig + Farro falls solidly within the restaurant trend that aims to create sustainability one meal at a time. While Fig + Farro serves vegetarian and not vegan fare, it has become a prime educator among a growing list of Twin Cities' plant-based eateries.

A "Get Vegucated" page on the restaurant's website includes in-depth coverage of how altering one's diet can save the planet.

The restaurant's chanterelle ravioli. Photo courtesy of Fig + Farro

But the restaurant doesn't force its hand – owner Michelle Courtright said she'd be happy if Americans just incorporated one plant-based meal into their weekly diet. The carbon dioxide savings would be equal to the removal of more than half a million cars from U.S. roads, she said.

The strategy makes sense: from the vast amounts of water needed to produce a pound of beef to burgeoning pesticide use and farm animals' methane emissions, which have been proven to be more harmful than carbon dioxide.

Switching to a plant-based diet reduces one's carbon footprint by an impressive 70% according to a 2016 Oxford University study.

Courtright became a vegetarian nearly 20 years ago and was previously known for founding the Minneapolis branding agency Made.

Dates wrapped in housemade bacon. Photo courtesy of Fig + Farro

Fig + Farro's menu

Fig + Farro creates meatless meals that are remarkably delicious – paired with an eclectic relaxed decor: chalkboard and fabric walls, some communal tables, and funky green and pink sofas set near the sleek bar area. Nearly wall-sized windows fronting Lake Street fold back during warmer months.

The establishment had just switched to its autumn menu during our visit; vegan and gluten-free selections were marked.

We began with chorizo dates wrapped in housemade bacon – a contender for actual bacon, which is saying a whole lot because (sorry vegans and vegetarians), what could possibly be more delicious than bacon?

It was delectable, the sweet-savory combo a great rival for the mouth. I never did discover the exact ingredients in the faux xbacon, although it was in my notes to ask. In truth, it's better kept a secret. I don't want to know. The taste is a revelation.

Fig + Farro. Photo: R. Daniel Foster

Potatoes predominate in at least one dish

Other starters: Lettuce wrap Szechuan Ssäm (lentil meatballs, kimchi slaw, ginger scallion sauce), stuffed figs (goat cheese, warm honey drizzle), and fried cauliflower with a choice of carrot mango habanero, buffalo, or jerk.

There wasn't anything on the starter menu that lacked complex taste and interest. Moving on, I dug into the beet tenderloin with its ring of charred Brussels sprouts, porcini, bourbon pan jus, and fried enoki among other flavorings – presented on a bed of mashed potatoes.

The beet itself was savory and perfectly cooked – not losing a desired crispness. But the potatoes overwhelmed. Perhaps the spread of spuds are part of the "soul-warming, belly-filling" cuisine described on the website (Courtright is adamant that diners leave sated). In truth, the dish could have pared some starch. The potatoes turned the dish somewhat arduous; it was a bit of chore to chomp through them.

The chanterelle ravioli presented subtle and smooth flavors that in were impenetrable in combination – an exceptional taste mystery. But I'll solve it for you with the ingredient rundown: celeriac, arugula, balsamic reduction truffle oil, and cashew cheese, which was the taste clincher. Chanterelles are an excellent base choice for the dish, their distinctive rich and earthy taste unmistakable yet indefinable.

Suspiro de Limeña. Photo: R. Daniel Foster

For dessert, we spooned into the Suspiro de Limeña created from avocado, sweet meringue, dulce de coco leche, and a dusting of cinnamon. Cocoa nibs added a bitter note and the lime both lightened and brightened the heavier avocado. Without it, the dish would have tipped from too much flavor weight. Instead, it was perfect.

Fig + Farro | 3001 Hennepin Ave S. Minneapolis, MN 55408 | 612.208.0609

Reservations

Top photo: Owner Michelle Courtright. Photo: R. Daniel Foster

This entry was posted on Wednesday, October 24th, 2018 at 8:03 pm and is filed under Food, Lifestyle
You can follow any responses to this entry through the Comments (RSS) feed. You can skip to the end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.