



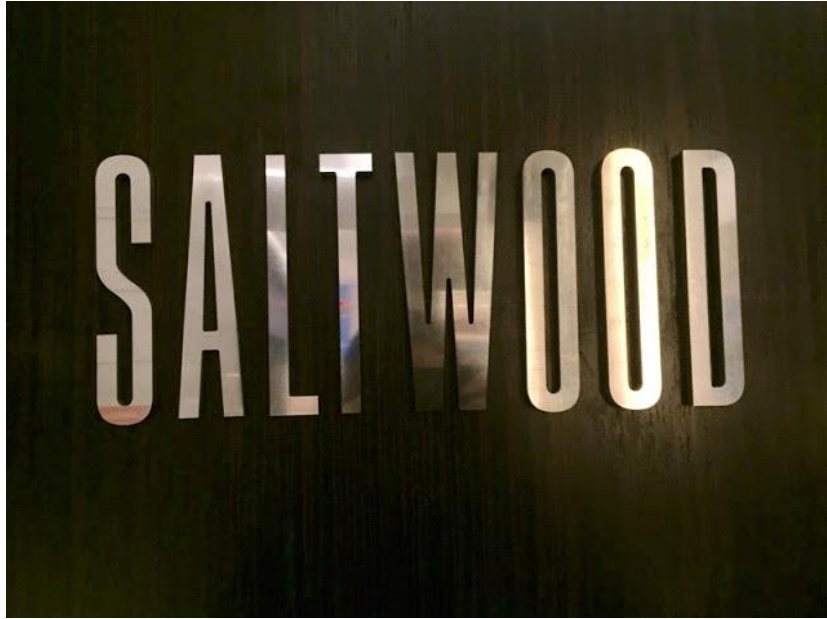
Hotel Dining Redefined at Saltwood Charcuterie & Bar

Hey readers,

This past Saturday evening, my guest and I were invited to dine at the newly opened Saltwood Charcuterie & Bar, a small-plate-style restaurant located in the heart of Midtown and inside the Loews Atlanta Hotel (a HUGE thank you & shout out go out to Morgan & ML+A and SW teams). Having opened their doors just shy of two months in early April 2015, Saltwood seeks to redefine the way people see hotel dining. "Named for its emphasis on salted, cured meats and classically rustic presentation on wood blocks, this casual eatery features a charcuterie station that serves as the restaurant's centerpiece. Diners can pull up bar stools to sample house-made and locally sourced items and sip on handcrafted cocktails and microbrews while watching the restaurant's charcuterie chef hand-carve meats and assemble charcuterie plates." Drawing inspiration from the American South infused with his European roots, Executive chef Olivier Gaupin, a native of Orleans, France and his culinary team, which includes sous chef Chris Español, Saltwood promises to offer Atlantans a unique dining experience with their carefully executed and eclectic meat-centric menu featuring local ingredients. Chef Gaupin himself, brings some pretty impressive credentials to Saltwood-he has over 25 years of culinary experience spanning the US and Europe, is one of only four chefs in Georgia to carry the Maitres Cuisiniers de France (Master Chef of France) distinctions, graduated from France's notable CFA Charles Peguy School in '89 and has worked coast-to-coast at various highly acclaimed hotels and Michelin-starred restaurants, which include Hotel Negresco, The Ritz-Carlton, and Pfister Hotel to name a few. At one point in time, Chef Gaupin was actually the head chef for the Defense Minister of France-how cool is that?! In other words, you can pretty much expect nothing but the best here, especially when you've got a Chef who knows what he's doing in the kitchen and isn't afraid to showcase his creativity and passion through Saltwood's locally-inspired cuisine. With all of that being said, you can bet that these two born and raised Southern gals were ready to get our M[EAT] on!

Let's get started:





☆Saltwood Sign



☆Dining Area





☆Saltwood Dog Cocktail (Plymouth, fresh pink grapefruit, honey & smoked Himalayan salt rim): With just the right combination of tangy and smoky, I was pleasantly surprised at how much I liked the smoked salt rim since it helped mellow out the sweet notes of the honey and grapefruit flavors-delicious!



☆Dinner Rolls with Banner Butter: Deliciously warm and soft rolls accompanied by one of the best locally made butters in GA, yes please!





☆Charcuterie Platter (Country pate and foie gras, spotted trotter "hunter" salami, Saltwood spam, Saltwood duck sausage and duck, pork and 5-spice rilette with black olive crostini and pistachio lemon gastrique): What a BEAUTIFUL spread! Am I right or am I right? Featuring an assortment of house-made and Spotted Trotter meats, deciding on which ones to order becomes very challenging. Luckily, with the help of our servers, we went with a few different option. In my opinion, the standouts were the Saltwood spam, Saltwood duck sausage and the ST "hunter" salami-all were individually unique and together complete!



☆Cheese Plate (Big Bloomy-aged, soft white rind; Dancing Fern-inspired by the french reblochon, it is soft and supple in texture and has a barnyard aroma; Nickajack-hard apple cider washed cheese, semi-soft and fruity yet savory, spring and summer seasonal choice; Green Hill-soft-ripened, double cream cow's milk cheese handcrafted in a camembert style; Thomasville Tomme-aged cow's milk cheese handcrafted in the style of the french pyrenees tome; Asher Blue-aged raw cow's milk blue cheese with a creamy exterior): Despite being lactose intolerant, cheese is my life! With locally sourced cheeses from various vendors in the South, namely Georgia and Tennessee, forget your mass-produced,



grocery store cheese and say hello to the "REAL DEAL." While 5 of the 6 cheeses we tasted were quite similar to one another, the one that truly stood out was the Asher Blue blue cheese, which paired incredibly well with a spoonful of honey.



☆Finisterre Octopus (Charred, pear & poppy vinaigrette, pickled beet, chorizo sausage, candied pistachio): Coming from someone who's been eating octopus since they were a toddler, I can understand how difficult it is to cook properly. If boiled/grilled too long, it can get too chewy and tough since it's overdone. If not boiled/grilled long enough, it leaves a slimy residue in your mouth and an undesirable texture. At Saltwood, you won't have either one of these issues since they've perfected the cooking technique-the octopus itself was incredibly tender, slightly chewy and had a nice char to it, while the zesty chorizo, pickled beets and fresh arugula tossed in a sweet and tangy vinaigrette was simply heavenly! All of the different flavors and textures meshed so well together that it seriously blew my mind!



☆Alabama Grassfed Ribeye (Duck fat fries, black truffle oil and parmesan, charred ramps and cracked pepper hollandaise): Aside from those gorgeous sear marks, this cut of ribeye was succulent, tender and flavorful. Additionally, the duck fat fries were impressively crispy and addicting and the hollandaise sauce made for a great dipping sauce for both the fries and the ribeye.



☆Tagliatelle (Braised veal cheek, port mushroom reduction, glazed cipollini, local pommery mustard, red dragon cheese): While this pasta dish was absolutely scrumptious in that I couldn't get enough of the perfectly al dente tagliatelle noodles, the tender veal cheek and the soft cipollini onions, it was just a tad bit salty for me. However, I am a very salt-sensitive person, so more likely than not, it's probably perfectly fine for everyone else.



☆Moules & Frites (Steamed mussels, pernod & chardonay, shallot & garlic, grilled parkers house roll, frites, salt wood "signature" smoked sea salt): There's just something about steamed mussels that attracts me to ordering them every time I see them on a menu. Here, the mussels were incredibly fresh and plump, while the lightly infused garlic and white wine broth really enhances the dish



and takes it over the top with how fragrant and tasty it is. The addition of the grilled bread is a nice touch since it helps to soak up the leftover broth to the very last drop and the fries are simply irresistible!



☆Blue Ridge Mountain Tea (Ole smoky blackberry moonshine, tea, red fruit muddle, black mission figs): Seeing that I've never had moonshine before, I was a bit apprehensive on trying this cocktail. However, with Nikita's recommendation, I'm so glad that I did because it was absolutely AMAZING! I could hardly taste the alcohol, which is how I actually prefer my alcoholic beverages and I loved the addition of the fresh fruits and the overall fruity tone of this cocktail-superb!





☆Dessert Menu





☆Shoo Fly Pie (Short crust pie, sorghum filling, orange sorbet): Despite living in the South my whole life, I'm not as familiar with sorghum as I should be, but I'll be darned if it doesn't have a similar taste to molasses! It's rich and has a nice fruity aftertaste without being too sweet. Also, it complements the buttery crust and tangy orange sorbet very well.



☆Blueberry Buckle (Farmer Dan's local blueberry, lemon buttermilk ice cream): Ya'll already know that I'm a huge sucker for anything that comes in a mini skillet, especially if it's dessert! This blueberry buckle was insanely tasty! A warm, soft and moist cake laced with whole blueberries and topped



with a delectable and creamy lemon-flavored buttermilk ice cream-it's just what the doctor ordered on a warm summer evening! And I promise, your tummy will thank you later!

As you can probably tell, both my sister & I had a spectacular evening at Saltwood. From the moment we entered the alluring lobby of the Loews Hotel to the minute we walked out the doors, our servers Nikita and Audrielle were unbelievably personable, attentive and incredibly helpful throughout the entire duration of our meal. The two of them knew the menu like the back of their hands and were able to make some fantastic recommendations on drinks, starters, entrées and even desserts. No glass was ever more than half empty before either one of them would come by with a refill, which if you know me, is a HUGE plus! Additionally, both Nikita and Audrielle always had a smile on their faces and would come around to check up on us, which made us feel really welcomed and at home. And as if that weren't enough, both Chef Chris and Manuel (Restaurant Manager) chatted with us a bit and thanked us for coming in, but really, we couldn't thank them enough for the invite and for dinner. It's pretty apparent that the staff here goes out of their way to provide some of the best customer service around, which is something that's not typically common with hotel dining, or at least not with all of my previous experiences dining at hotel restaurants-so two BIG thumbs up to the SW crew! Not only was the food here amazing, hence the title of this article, "Hotel Dining Redefined....." since Saltwood is changing the hotel restaurant game, but the service truly does go above and beyond what you'd normally expect from other restaurants in the same vicinity! Moving onto the decor, the interior exudes a rather relaxed vibe with its cream colored walls, dark wooden and copper grey leather furnishings. What's great is that there's 3 seating options-if you're looking for a more intimate, private environment, there are tables within the enclosed dining room; if you don't mind semi-loud to loud noises, then the dining area that is open to the Loews lobby is also available; if you like dining outdoors, then the patio is also an option as well. In the enclosed dining room, there's a playful and educational chalkboard-type wall that shows you the different cuts of meats from a pig, different types of knives used and more-it's almost like a butcher's blueprint-how appropriate and fitting! In all, whether you're staying at the Loews Hotel or you're just looking for some place to grab a few handcrafted cocktails and shareable plates and/or looking to having a nice, casual dinner, then look no further because Saltwood is the answer! Even if you aren't wanting to eat a full meal, ordering a couple of their small plates will fill you up & will give you the opportunity to try multiple items on their menu, all of which are relatively affordable, delicious and generously portioned. I mean, with items like that divine finisterre octopus I gushed about earlier, in addition to their guancia flat bread, charcuterie/cheese platters and more, how could you possibly go wrong with anything on their menu? And just one last note before I wrap up, I wanted to give another thank you to Morgan and the ML+A team and the Saltwood crew for making our first and certainly not last experience here so enjoyable! What are you waiting for? Erase those preconceived notions and horrible experience you've had at hotel restaurants and let Saltwood show you how it's really done!

Have a splendid day,
-Sandy

<http://bellavivere.blogspot.com/2015/05/hotel-dining-redefined-at-saltwood.html>



MELISSA LIBBY & ASSOCIATES