

The House at 300 East

If these walls could talk...
the stories they'd tell

TEXT BY HEIDI BILLOTTO PHOTOGRAPHY BY GERIN CHOINIERE

It's the unexpected twists and turns that life and the universe offer that make and keep things interesting. Just ask Catherine Coulter, owner of 300 East restaurant located in Dilworth at 300 East Blvd in Charlotte.

This February 14, Catherine and the staff at 300 East celebrated 32 years in business – an achievement to be proud of, particularly in the restaurant industry. Catherine remembers it was snowing that first night in 1986, and the restaurant did not yet have an adjacent parking lot, but even still, things kicked off with a bang and have been going strong ever since.

It all started at another restaurant on East Blvd which many long time Charlotte residents will remember – the original White Horse. While she didn't own the White Horse, Coulter worked

there in management for 10 years, and when that establishment fell into bankruptcy and lost its lease in 1985, Coulter, the trustee for the restaurant in the eyes of the court, started looking for another location in which to rebuild.

"It was really a happy accident," Coulter explained. "I was taking a walk in the park and ran into an old friend who had a client building a multi purpose condo/shopping complex looking for a restaurant to be the anchor tenant."

When Coulter first saw the house the developer wanted to repurpose, it was divided into three separate apartments – two downstairs and one upstairs – and frankly was a mess. Charlotte history books tell us the structure was built in the early 1900s as a single family home, then over the years it morphed into apartments and probably would have



Grass Fed Burger* – Windy Hill Farms Beef on Duke's Brioche with two additions: Sautéed Mushrooms & Leeks, Onion Marmalade, Gorgonzola, Cheddar, Pepper Cheese, Pimento Cheese, Horseradish Cream, Heritage Farms Bacon, Avocado



Left to right: Laney Jahkel-Parrish, Pastry Sous; Kristine Schmidt, Executive Chef; Cathy Coulter, Proprietor; Darrin Gray, Kitchen Manager; Ashley Boyd, Pastry Chef; Erin Gerin, Sous Chef; not pictured: Zach Hubbard, Lead Cook/Kitchen Manager

become condos or been torn down, if not for the foresight of the developer.

The property was just what Coulter was looking for. She signed on the dotted line and moved the White Horse concept into the new location. As soon as the old business came out of bankruptcy, she changed the name and made it her own to get on the right foot with a fresh start, and it's been a successful ride ever since.

"That's not to say there weren't hard years and rough times," Coulter continued. We eventually bought the property – it wasn't easy, but owning the building is probably what made our longevity possible.

Today, 32 years later, since that first snowy day, the two story house almost on the corner of East and South Boulevards does a bustling restaurant business and has garnered quite a bit of local, regional and national attention.

Pastry chef Ashley Boyd, Coulter's daughter, was a toddler when her mom worked at the White Horse and used to be the hostess at 300 East on weekends when she was in high school. Today she is the pastry chef and works hand in hand

Detroit, she came back home to the family owned restaurant in 2001 to work as GM and occasionally did some of the desserts. One thing led to another, and Ashley settled in to work the sweeter side of the 300 East menu.

Since that time, 300 East with Kris, Ashley and the rest of the talented staff in the front and back of the house has made big strides, and the lines often out the door at the restaurant tell the tale of the continued culinary success. 300 East was featured on The Food Network's *Diners, Drive-In and Dives* in 2015 and continues to be featured in blog posts, magazine articles and televised restaurant segments, not only by this food and restaurant writer but by other local and regional publications as well. Always fun to share a place that is more than worth your time and your dining dollars – 300 East is definitely on my list of highly recommended places to enjoy.

Open for lunch, dinner and Sunday brunch; 300 East accepts reservations through Open Table or by phone. Because of the cozy nature of each of the restaurant's dining areas, they can only accept reservations for parties of up to 12 guests (up to eight for Sunday Brunch).

For more information call 704.332.6507 or visit the website at 300East.net. ■



Garlic Broiled North Carolina Shrimp – UAV Ricotta Polenta, Crispy Prosciutto, Calabrian Pepper Butter, Local Kale

with 300 East's Executive Chef Kris Schmidt to feature local farm fare on the menu in plates both sweet and savory. Featured dishes change from month to month, week to week with the seasons; and sometimes, with Chef Kris Schmidt's whim, from day to day.

Schmidt has been at the helm in the 300 East kitchen for nearly 20 years. She came to Charlotte to cook here in the early 2000s from a restaurant in Davidson and brought with her a lot of front and back of the house staff and a culinary style that spoke to the clientele at 300 East. Since her start, Kris has made the menu her own, and the crowds continue to love all that she creates from lunch and dinner specialties to creative Sunday brunch features. The 300 East kitchen supports a dozen or so local Charlotte area farms and artisan producers at any one time, featuring locally raised vegetables and proteins on the menu on a daily basis.

While Ashley grew up in the restaurant and had helped her mom out in the front of the house from time to time, she had no idea she wanted to be a pastry chef. After high school she went to art school in Chicago. After graduation, while she was looking for a job, she took a position at a new Brazilian restaurant just to keep things afloat.

As luck and timing would have it, the pastry chef at this new place also worked for Rick Bayless at Frontera Grill, and Ashley found herself drawn to the art of making dessert. She learned a lot, and then after self training and culinary stints in Charleston and



White Chocolate Brioche Pudding, Pink Lady Apple Butter, Sweet Potato & Black Walnuts