

Farm to Fork & Then Some at The Asbury

Chef Matthew Krenz's Contemporary Fall Flavors Stand Out Above the Crowd

Looking to the crisp cool change of seasons as late summer turns first to a taste of fall and then to the cooler climes the last few months of the year bring?

With the change in weather comes a change in menu for most chef-driven restaurants, and at The Asbury at the Dunhill Hotel, this seasonal change is no exception to the rule.

The game changer at The Asbury this last quarter of the year, is a change at the helm as Chef Matthew Krenz moves up the culinary ladder from The Asbury's Chef de Cuisine to the position of Executive Chef and Director of Food and Beverage Services at Charlotte's historic Dunhill Hotel.

Chef Chris Coleman, now Executive Chef at Stoke restaurant and Director of Culinary Experience at The Marriott Center City, held the position of Executive Chef and Director of F&B from the get go at The Asbury, and he created a dream team of chefs that included Krenz as the Chef de Cuisine.

The pairing of culinary talent just made sense. I can remember asking Chris just after The Asbury opened if he had ever worked with Matt — it made sense to me as their cooking styles were so similar. Yes, he told me, confirming with a wink and a smile that they would both really like to build that relationship and were both just waiting for the right opportunity.

In time, Matt did indeed come on board to join



The Asbury's Executive Chef, Matthew Krenz

Chris and the team at The Asbury, leaving his executive sous chef position at Passion 8 where he had begun making an impressive mark almost immediately on the Charlotte food scene as a partner in crime with the talented Passion 8 owner, chef Luca Annunziata.

This is the great thing about Charlotte's culinary community. The group of chefs we are lucky enough to call our own, all really have a true respect for others' talents; they learn from each other, all genuinely like each other and contribute to each other's professional growth at every turn.

What makes one stronger, makes them all stronger and in the end, makes the culinary offerings in the Queen City stronger as well.

AN EYE FOR DETAIL

With all of that going for him and more, I am excited to see the wining and dining opportunities ahead for us all, as Krenz builds his own culinary team and puts his unique spin and creative culinary personality into each new seasonal plate of farm to fork flavors on The Asbury menu for breakfast, lunch, dinner and weekend brunches as well. "I am humbled every day to work with our region's farmers and suppliers. We have an incredible opportunity in Charlotte. I don't ever want to take for granted what I put on a plate," says the passionate 31-year-old.

JUST A TASTE

Rolling out this fourth quarter of 2016, look for the big, bold, smoldering flavors of fall on The Asbury menu. I'll tease with a few examples to whet your palate: rich and creamy mac and cheese of melt in your mouth proportions, studded with the obligatory dose of crispy, perfectly cooked bacon; Krenz's delicious and equally innovative take on the Southern classic Shrimp and Grits with Smoked Cheddar Grits, Chorizo Gravy, Butter Poached Shrimp, Texas Caviar; and what I deem to be one of



Mac and Cheese



Shrimp and Grits with Smoked Cheddar Grits



Beef Liver and Onions

the best bets of the season on The Asbury dinner menu — and there are a lot of them — Krenz's small plate of Liver and Onions.

Yes, I know, that is not what you were expecting here, but trust me on this one.

First of all, the liver is often beef liver from Krenz Ranch, a cattle ranch run by Matthew's parents. So that local and family tie takes the dish up a notch or three, in and of itself.

Since Matt came on board, and maybe even before, The Asbury has boasted a Krenz Ranch Blackboard Special as a part of the dinner menu featuring a different cut of beef each day, using and

featuring every cut of beef imaginable. This is how farm to fork is truly done, so there is no waste, and Matthew's visionary use of beef offal, such as the liver this season, is nothing short of spectacular.

Flavors here are light, yet complicated; layered not unctuous, as one might expect liver and onions to be. The nuances include pickled cherries, smoked blue cheese and a slightly sweet Vidalia onion demi sauce. It is most certainly, perhaps unexpectedly, a crowd pleasing dish — rich, smoky and full flavored and will, I promise, leave you wanting more. To say nothing of the fact that it is the most beautiful presentation of Beef Liver and Onions that you will ever

see — a testimony to the artistic eye of this chef who makes food that almost looks too good to eat, but eat it and enjoy you should.

As it has been since the inception, The Asbury offers dishes that are uniquely Carolinian: modern tastes with a double dollop of southern hospitality thrown in for good measure. No matter the season, look for strong ties to family, to locally harvested and heirloom ingredients native to our area as well as specialty items grown by small, family farms throughout region to come from the kitchen at The Asbury, no matter the meal.

In addition to regular breakfast, lunch and dinner

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menus, Krenz and his culinary team plan monthly collaborative dinners with chefs and other culinary craftspeople from across the Carolinas. Follow them on social media or subscribe to their email list for complete details and to be the first in the know for each of these special events.

IT'S THE CHEESIEST

I would be remiss in writing this article on Krenz and The Asbury, if I didn't say a word about cottage cheese. Not just any cottage cheese, local Uno Alla Volta cottage cheese from U.A.V. owner and cheese monger Zack Gadberry.

The Asbury menu often features selections from this Charlotte-based cheese maker, and while all are delicious beyond compare, none has ever quite caught my eye as has the U.A.V. cottage cheese. Zack started making the cottage cheese at the request of Matt who wanted to feature it with tomatoes and such on his summer menu. Matt featured the cheese in a nothing-short-of-spectacular dish, Krenz's Summer Cottage Cheese Pie.

Summer is gone now and so it this menu item, but my hope is the U.A.V. cottage cheese might reappear this season on The Asbury menu folded into ravioli perhaps with pumpkin or seasonal squash or crafted with caramel perhaps.

It is up to the whim of the chef, but at least this food writer can dream and in the meantime, I will quench my thirst for local cottage cheese (as should you, dear reader) at the local Matthews Community Farmers' Market and The Charlotte Regional Market where Zack and his wife Victoria can be found selling these curds of choice and all of their other tasty cheeses every Saturday morning. Check my blog and Facebook page for frequent posts as to how, inspired by local chefs the likes of Krenz, Coleman, Annunziata and more, I am eating/serving my U.A.V. cottage cheese each week, but I digress...

Back to The Asbury, for more tastes of Krenz's fall and upcoming holiday menus check out The Asbury for lunch and dinner seven days a week, and don't miss brunch on Saturdays and Sundays. The Dunhill Hotel Bar features a selection of snacks and meals from the restaurant as well. In addition to the ground floor restaurant space, The Asbury caters unique, private dining experiences and hosts special events throughout its intimate second floor.

The Dunhill Hotel is Charlotte's only registered hotel with Historic Hotels of America, part of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. With guests over the years, the likes of Sir Paul McCartney and others of note, its legacy and history are rich.

Designed by architect Louis Asbury, Sr. (Yes, that's where they got the name of the restaurant!) the hotel originally opened in 1929 as the Mayfair Manor. The 10-story hotel with 60 well-appointed guest rooms has recently been fully restored. Guest rooms feature writing desks, armoires, triple-sheeted beds and soft linens suited for the sweetest of dreams. Elegant marble bathrooms, guest robes and evening turn down service, plus a wonderful little lobby bar and, of course, three meals a day from The Asbury make it the perfect locale for in town guests or a Charlotte staycation all your own.

In addition, The Dunhill Hotel offers intimate meeting space for corporate and private functions from corporate events to weddings and private dinners and receptions.

Parking is conveniently available behind The Dunhill Hotel in the Fifth Third Bank garage. Restaurant guests receive complimentary validation for up to two hours. Garage entrances are on both 6th Street and Church Street.

The Asbury is located just off the lobby of the Dunhill Hotel with an entrance off Tryon Street as well. The address is 235 North Tryon Street, Charlotte, NC 28202. For reservations call 704.342.1193. #TellThemHeidiSentYou