

Southern Roots

text by JILL CLAIR GENTRY • photos by ELIZABETH GELINEAU



The wait is finally over.

Three years ago, the staff at the Grand Hotel began renovating its dining areas and dreaming about an entirely new culinary direction for the iconic hotel. They envisioned a restaurant and bar that would take locally sourced to the next level, its menu inspired by on-site gardens, local farmers and high-quality ingredients.

After years of planning, Southern Roots and the adjacent 1847 bar opened in September. Executive sous chef Gregory Baker says the new concept has nurtured his team's creativity. The menu changes daily, and each member of the kitchen staff is buzzing with excitement and pride about every beautifully presented plate.

Baker and his team excel at creating dishes that capitalize on contrasting flavors. Pickled peaches pair surprisingly well with earthy hummus. Velvety grouper is complemented by the crunch of bitter greens. Sharp cheeses offset the sweetness of beets. Everything is fresh.

"Before, we had a steakhouse and a seafood restaurant," Baker says. "That put up some serious culinary boundaries. People came

in and wanted a steak, or they wanted fish. Now, there are absolutely no boundaries except what ingredients are available around us."

Menu creation begins on site with a daily harvest from 6,000 square feet of gardens on the hotel grounds. The attractive raised beds, cultivated by a culinary gardener, serve two functions: beautification of the property and inspiration for each dish and drink.

"It just doesn't get any more 'Grand Hotel' than this," says beverage manager Daniel Fuernrohr. "Our cocktail culture is also focused on local ingredients — our bartender creates our daily cocktail based on what herbs are available outside, and our frozen drinks are created using all fresh ingredients."

Even the actual dishes used in the restaurant are locally produced. Each plate and bowl was handmade by local potter Tom Jones over the span of an entire year. The pottery's soft blues and oranges pay homage to the incredible sunsets guests experience at the Point.

The Grand Hotel is already a destination for people from around the world who travel to Fairhope in search of the quintessential Southern experience — now, it has a restaurant that will certainly become a destination of its own. **MB**

[ON THE MENU]

WE'VE GOT THE BEET!

Cylindrical, triangular and other geometrically shaped baby beets and pieces of blue cheese are scattered with honey roasted peanuts, seasonal greens and a deep-hued beet vinaigrette.

RED SNAPPER AGUACHILE

Bright, refreshing and tangy, this Latin-inspired small plate features thinly sliced raw Gulf snapper topped with lime juice, micro cucumbers, Fresno chiles, radishes, shallots, cilantro, marigold petals, tangerine oil and a sprinkle of sea salt.

POULET ROUGE BREAST

Sous vide chicken is formed into several small cylinder shapes (half dark meat, half breast), wrapped in its deep-fried skin and topped with fried shallots. Wild mushrooms and fava beans cooked in a rich butter sauce along with a chicken demi-glace add to this large plate's over-the-top richness.

CHOCOLATE GARDEN

Who knew chocolate could take on so many distinct forms in one dessert? Chocolate lovers are sure to swoon over the creative ways pastry chef Kimberly Lyons uses chocolate in this decadent dessert, which features Valrhona fudge, chocolate rocks and mint.

WE'VE GOT THE BEET SALAD

Smoky Sips

Garden-to-glass cocktails are signature at the Grand Hotel's 1847 bar, and this luxury libation takes a classic drink and adds an earthy applewood twist.

photo by ELIZABETH GELINEAU

SMOKED OLD-FASHIONED

2 ounces Woodford Reserve
bourbon, or bourbon/rye
whiskey of choice
1 ounce simple syrup
4 shakes Peychaud's barrel-
aged bitters
Orange peel, for garnish

Add all ingredients to a carafe. Using a smoking gun tool, add smoke, cover and let sit for 30 seconds. Pour into a rocks glass, add ice and orange peel.

