



Drive, walk and then feast

[Houmas House serving up spectacular cuisine]

By Lorin Gaudin

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Twenty minutes away from Baton Rouge, in the lovely river community of Darrow, sits the striking and gorgeously renovated Houmas House Plantation.

The house is stunning, the property lush and full of familiar native plants. Stroll along the winding path that leads past a pond and around crooked, ancient oak trees to a tall tower (a pigeoniere) called the Turtle Bar. The signature cocktail here is the mint julep, naturally. Have one (or two), then meander down the path, arriving at a broad pavilion where a smattering of tables is set for lunch (and Sunday brunch) at The Burnside Café.

Lunch here is a dream. Does a velvety beef burgundy stew studded with sweet green peas and fork-tender vegetables surrounding a small mound of truffle-oil drizzled rice tempt you? Does the fact that said lunch is served on fine china surprise you? How about lunch prices that hover around \$7 and top out at \$12?

It may sound like a dream, but it's all very real, including the rustic, elegant herb and vegetable garden just outside the pavilion—lovingly tended, harvested and blended into a dazzling array of dishes.

Jeremy Langlois, the talented 26-year-old chef from Baton Rouge, has recently received national recognition for Latil's Landing, the plantation's fine dining restaurant in the main house.

When local buzz reached the ears of Esquire Magazine's food writer, and Latil's was named one of the country's top 20 restaurants in Esquire's November issue, the rest of the country learned what we already knew—stellar dining awaits you at Latil's.

An evening meal might begin with a tweaked classic like Dixie shrimp—beer battered jumbo gulf shrimp nestled atop delectable cheddar cheese grits, surrounded by tasso cream sauce. Or a sinfully rich and silky foie gras with lost bread—the pan-seared medallion of foie gras sitting atop a slice of savory French toast. Choose the bisque of curried pumpkin, crawfish and corn for homey comfort. A sly hint of curry balances the corn's sweetness and the crawfish's bite.

A broad selection of entrées includes a coffee marinated rack of lamb with creamed potatoes, charbroiled duck breast fanned atop smashed candied yams and drizzled with praline sauce, and a luxe boneless veal steak with Roquefort blue cheese demi-glace and a tasso potato cake.

Dessert can be summed up in three words—mint julep custard.

Dining at The Burnside Café/Latil's Landing is a complete sensory experience at lunch, dinner or a lazy Sunday brunch. It's well worth the short trip to Houmas House Plantation, where Chef Langlois continues to reveal his culinary artistry to us, and to the world.