

Taste Test Restaurant Review: Belly Timber

July 29, 2008 -- By Ashley Gartland
[Belly Timber](#)

If you haven't already heard, [Belly Timber's](#) name is Victorian slang for "food of all sorts". And indeed the menu spans a wide range of dishes from commonplace (a burger) to [adventurous](#) (bone marrow aioli) to the occasional rarity (pickled rhubarb). Even the cocktail menu here offers tipples that straddle the line between everyday and extraordinary imbibing, with an old-fashioned listed alongside multiple absinthe-infused selections.

Such cocktails take center stage at Belly Timber, which opened this summer in the 50-seat Victorian-era house on SE Hawthorne Street that was once Chef Tucker's Patisserie. Sandwiched between two handsome dining rooms done up in textured wallpaper, the gleaming wood bar acts as the establishment's centerpiece. Here, nearly 20 creations from local cocktail fanatic and bartender Lance Mayhew will surely draw repeat clientele. It's an excellent place to start an evening.

Post-cocktail indulgence, more substantive starters and small bites can be found on the dining room menu including the housemade charcuterie plate, and a bowl of fragrant seared shrimp and spicy chickpeas paired with grilled bread. The charcuterie plate offered some star players amidst that cuts of meat, particularly the cochon frites. Made from shredded Sweet Briar Farms pork shoulder, these breaded nibbles caused my dining companion to question why no one had thought to make pork fries before. I wished for more shrimp however, or perhaps simply larger shrimp in the latter starter, as well as more than one slice of grilled bread to sop up the soothing tomato-and-herb based sauce that the shrimp and peas swam in.

Also pleasing as a starter was a simple butter lettuce salad that introduced us to the tart pleasure of eating pickled rhubarb.

Elsewhere on the menu, Chef David Siegel presents diners with opportunities for further adventurous eating. Numerous times, we questioned our knowledgeable waitress as to what we were ordering or eating, which made our dinner not only enjoyable but also educational. Even the more common dishes at Belly Timber, like buttery pan-seared halibut crowned with fennel, contain an element of surprise. In this case, it was basil seeds.

The halibut (available as either a small plate or full-sized entrée, as are most of the main course dishes) arrived atop a bed of toothsome wheat berries and hunter green kale; my only complaint was that the shrimp that also accompanied it was served cold and contrasted harshly with the warm, fork-tender fish.

But bitty orecchiette noodles brimming with hearty, humble rabbit



Child's Play



Mako, the Children's Shop

When you're talking food of all sorts, Belly Timber certainly lives up to its name.



The perfect spot to enjoy gelato



sausage ragu were devoured without complaint and left no room for improvement. A handful of remaining dishes also exist to please a [wealth](#) of appetites, including the BT Burger sided with relentlessly addictive housemade fries, and housemade pierogis served with morels, carrots, English peas and Dijon Crème fraîche.

Even the concise dessert list offers variety with sweet, sometimes savory, desserts like a banana pudding paired with candied bacon.

After all, such variety is the key to Belly Timber's namesake. And with a few menu tweaks and continued emphasis on the cocktail program, it could become the very reason Belly Timber succeeds.



Wallace Park

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