

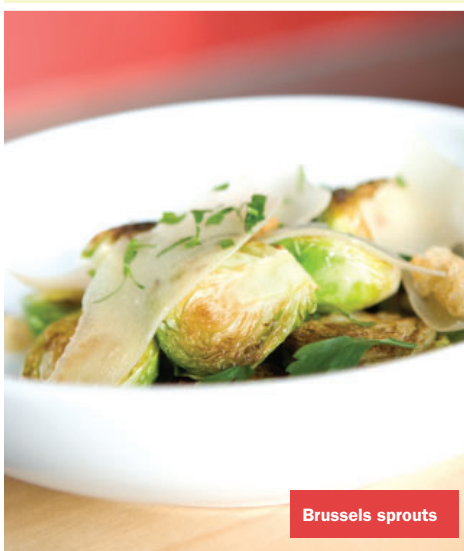


Bocado

Todd Ginsberg,
executive chef,
Bocado

REFINED BITES

Bocado provides more than a mouthful of contemporary American cuisine



Brussels sprouts



Brian Lewis, owner, Bocado

BY HOPE S. PHILBRICK

In Spanish, *bocado* means mouthful or bite. Now open in Atlanta's Westside neighborhood, Bocado is a restaurant striving "to make every bite a mouthful," says owner Brian Lewis. "We want our guests to perceive that every mouthful is a consistent, great bite of food."

A third-generation restaurateur, Lewis previously operated a fast-casual grill in Atlanta and then an upscale casual restaurant in Birmingham, Ala. He says Atlanta's vibe as an "open-minded, international melting pot" beckoned him to return to the city. Lewis' grandfather ran several restaurants in the '40s and '50s, including "Melva Café, which gets a little honorable mention in the 'Fried Green Tomatoes' book," he says. But his own interest in the restaurant industry first blossomed during his college years while working at his father's winery in Virginia. "We'd put on wine dinners for 50 to 100 guests and

pair wines with seven courses," he recalls. The vibe and customer reaction to these dinners hooked him.

Ambiance continues to be important to Lewis. The Bocado concept grew from his desire to "provide great service in a well-defined space and pair it with food that's elegant and refined but not pretentious," he says. To help design the space, he called in ai3 Inc. Reflecting Bocado's commitment to sustainability, common materials are used in unique ways throughout the space, such as biodegradable construction tubes mounted behind the bar to serve as wine racks.

Todd Ginsberg was hired as executive chef. Prior to joining Bocado, Ginsberg worked with the Concentrics Restaurants group as executive chef at Tap and chef at Trois. Previous stints included the Dining Room at the Ritz-Carlton Buckhead and Asher in Roswell. Ginsberg graduated with honors from the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, N.Y. "Todd and I see eye to eye on where we want to take this restaurant," says Lewis. "It was the perfect timing for both of us to meet up."

DINING ESSENTIALS

BOCADO

887 Howell Mill Road
404-815-1399
www.bocadoatlanta.com

Hours: Lunch: Mon.-Fri. 11 a.m.-2:30 p.m. and Sat. 11:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Dinner: Mon.-Sat. beginning at 5 p.m.

Reservations: Recommended but not required

Dress: Business casual to whatever's comfortable

Cost: Sandwiches and plates from \$6, entrées from \$12

Alcohol: Full bar

Parking: Complimentary valet or street

PHOTOS/THE REYNOLDS GROUP

The culinary focus is on organic and sustainable food. "I always use what's in season," says Ginsberg. "Then I honestly just try to take the ingredients that are the primary focus of each dish and compliment them."

"It's really about being pure and letting the food quality speak for itself," says Lewis. "We're merely handmaids of getting it to the plate. We don't over-sauce or over-spice our food to cover up anything. We let the food speak for itself."

The name may be Spanish, but the menu is contemporary American. At lunch, the sandwich-centric menu also boasts soups, salads and sides. For dinner, some sandwiches rotate off to make room for entrées. Though not the focus, "there's definitely some Latin and Central American influences just because I love ethnic foods," admits Ginsberg, citing items such as Cuban, Mexican and roasted poblano sandwiches.

The most popular plate is Brussels sprouts, which Ginsberg roasts with lemon, capers and Parmigiano-Reggiano. The burger stack also has many fans. "It's iconic, with American cheese and house-made pickles on

a great bun," says Ginsberg. "We use a special blend of chuck, brisket and short rib grass-fed meat. It's very juicy with the perfect amount of nostalgia." Gnocchi, a popular dinner entrée, is currently served with spicy sausage and dinosaur kale.

Affordability is a key consideration. "We can provide a great product and dining experience and give our guests a fair price," says Lewis. "Ultimately, my belief is that there are four pillars for doing things right in this business: a great general design, terrific food, good service and a price point that is satisfactory. When people get all those things, they will be happy, talk about you and come back."

The ultimate goal is to become one of Atlanta's favorite restaurants. "We're excited to keep going, keep working hard every day to attract more people," says Lewis.

The hope is to help strengthen the neighborhood. "I think the Westside is growing and will be a destination for restaurants, bars and galleries," says Ginsberg. "I would love to see Bocado as a great neighborhood restaurant that brings in people from outside and inside the perimeter." **SP**