

GET LUCKIE

New restaurant and lounge charms with sleek décor, chic offerings and affordable menu

BY HOPE S. PHILBRICK

The children's menu at Luckie Food Lounge is so clever that it almost makes me wish I had a kid. *Almost.* The offerings include all the standards like cheeseburgers, chicken fingers, grilled cheese, cheese pizza and spaghetti and meatballs; it's the presentation that's so unique. The children's menu is showcased in a View-Master so kids can click through pictures and see what they'd like. (The only potential problem is that, in the pictures, plates of food appear on a table strewn with toys, so kids may get cranky upon learning that the toys aren't included with the meal.)

Being kid-friendly makes sense, since this restaurant is located only steps away from the Georgia Aquarium. But the place draws an eclectic crowd and on a recent Friday night there were no children to be seen. An energetic, upbeat vibe fills the main dining room, which is sectioned into booths, tables, a long communal table, cocktail bar and sushi-bar seating, plus an exclusive members-only lounge on the roof. The contemporary décor features shades of blue and black with concrete and walnut touches, seven miles of LED lighting—perhaps the funkier are the lights near the sushi bar that mimic jelly fish and change color as they float up and down their electrical cords—and 2,200 gallons of salt water in three different aquariums that house more than 350 fish. Music plays over 80 speakers; the noise level is loud, yet somehow it's still possible to hold a conversation with your dinner companions without shouting.

The adult menu is a mouthwatering read. It's the same story at lunch and dinner. Options include sushi, soups and salads, burgers and sandwiches, brick-oven pizzas, pasta, seafood, steaks and chops. Affordability seems to be the underlying theme.

One of the starters, the calamari is laced with a soy glaze, which lends the dish a succulent sweet note while red peppers and scallions add light heat.

Atop its 10-inch thin-and-crispy crust, the barbecue chicken pizza features pulled meat,



Fish tacos at Luckie Food Lounge



Luckie Food Lounge

COURTESY LUCKIE FOOD LOUNGE



Barbecue chicken pizza

PHOTO BY SPARK ST. JUDE

smoked gouda cheese, bacon, sour cream and scallions. We ask for the bacon to be omitted, and the request is readily accommodated. The wood-fire grilled pizza is so good that I don't think I could dine here without ordering at least one of the five on the menu.

As if it were possible to wrap the Caribbean up in a tortilla, the fish tacos arrive fresh and flavorful. Three soft-shelled tacos are generously filled with grilled Chilean sea bass, jicama-roasted poblano slaw, tomatoes, avocado and sour cream and served atop cilantro rice.

The Ribeye-and-Remy sandwich stuffs a toasted Hoagie roll with thin sliced ribeye and Swiss cheese. Served on the side is a tasty Remy cognac sauce; the cognac adds depth of flavor to the sauce without dominating it.

The varied sushi menu includes nigiri, sashimi and makimono. The Luckie California roll matches fresh lump crabmeat with strips of Haas avocado and European cucumber and masago (which is caviar or the roe from smelt fish). Charm pairs shrimp tempura and snow crab with smoked salmon all drizzled with teriyaki sauce. Sunshine tops snow crab salad with shredded crab strips

and red masago and tobiko (the roe from flying fish). The vegetarian Grasshopper features long white enoki mushrooms, asparagus, mango, beets, carrots, pickled daikon radish, pickled carrots and avocado. Cowboy Chung is a delectable pie of mushrooms, asparagus, scallions, a thin egg omelet, cucumber, pickled daikon radish and carrots topped with a thin strip of Korean barbecue ribeye steak and doused with Korean chili sauce. All beautiful and tasty, I can't pick a favorite among them.

After dinner, we step into Charm, a sundry shop adjacent to the dining room. Charm sells magazines, restaurant logo merchandise, candy, boxed lunches, sushi to-go, coffee, pastries and 18 flavors of homemade gelato. After sample spoonfuls of pumpkin, lemon and mango, we settle on strawberry and order a pint to take home.

With its competitive prices, fun atmosphere, quality ingredients and tasty preparations, it's easy to feel lucky upon discovering Luckie. While it's near the Georgia Aquarium, this is not a place Atlantans should relegate as just for tourists. **SP**

DINING ESSENTIALS

LUCKIE FOOD LOUNGE

375 Luckie St.
404-525-5825
www.luckiefoodlounge.com

Hours: Lunch: 11 a.m.–4 p.m. daily; Dinner: Mon.–Sat. 4 p.m.–2 a.m.; Sun. 4–11 p.m. \$10 cover Fri. and Sat. after 9 p.m.

Reservations: Only for parties of 10 or more

Dress Code: Tasteful casual

Cuisine: American, sushi

Alcohol: Full bar

Smoking: Outdoors

Cost: Sushi from \$3; burgers and sandwiches, \$9–\$15; pizzas and salads, \$8–\$13; entrées, \$12–\$30.

Credit Cards: American Express, MasterCard, Visa, Discover

Outdoor Seating: Patio

Parking: Valet \$3 after 5 p.m. and \$5 after 10 p.m. for 3 hours, or self-park at the Georgia Aquarium parking deck.



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