

RESTAURANT REVIEW

North Quarter Tavern is tops

The Dish on dining

North Quarter Tavern
 ★★★ (out of 4)
Where: 861 N. Orange Ave. Orlando (between Marks and Park Lake Streets)
When: 11:30 a.m.-10 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday; 11:30 a.m.-11 p.m. Friday; 5-11 p.m.; 10:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Sunday brunch
Cost: \$6-\$18
Beverages: Full bar
Wines by the glass: From \$6
Attire: Casual
Extras: Good for groups, happy hour (5-7 p.m.)
 Tuesday-Friday, \$3 draft beers, \$5 mixed drinks, \$7 chef's snacks), Lynx Lymmo Orange Line stops across the street from restaurant, outdoor dining, separate bar, takeout, televisions, valet parking after 5 p.m., vegetarian options
Noise level: Moderate buzz to pleasantly loud
Wheelchair access: Excellent
Credit: American Express, Discover, MasterCard and Visa
Call: 407-757-0930
Online: northquartertavern.com and Facebook



NORTH QUARTER TAVERN

Beef short rib tacos with warm tortillas, guac, beans, lime crema, salsa, pickled jalapenos.

BY HEATHER MCPHERSON
 Orlando Sentinel Food Editor

Downtown Orlando's North Quarter is continuing its expansion with new dining choices. A recent addition is the aptly named North Quarter Tavern, a chef-driven bar with impressive food under the direction of chef Matt Wall.

Developed by the neighboring Citrus restaurant team, the tavern serves lunch, dinner and Sunday brunch.

The interior is industrial-light with a mix of high-top and regular tables, plus seating at the bar. The spacious patio is illuminated with cantina lights in the evening.

While older sibling Citrus is upscale-casual to resort-chic at times, the newcomer to the family is as comfortable as a pair of well-worn Topsiders but still manages to maintain a city center cool vibe.

The three-meat pizza (\$13) is large enough to be an entrée. The fresh-tossed crust builds from an earthy Calabrian chili marinara sauce and then is topped with bacon, meatballs, smoked ham, fresh mozzarella and nutty pecorino. Paired with the local tomato salad (\$10) at lunch, two pieces of pizza were filling and the rest disappeared in record time when I offered to co-workers. The salad was no sidekick slouch: The heirloom tomatoes were tossed with field greens, bacon, buttermilk dressing and bits of blue cheese.

My companion had the Tavern burger (\$13) served on a grilled bun. The beef was full-flavored and draped with American cheese and mild onion. (You can add bacon or a fried egg for \$3.) The platter kept rocking with sweet bread-and-butter pickles and thick-cut fries. The rich and robust housemade ketchup had similar flavor nu-

ances to tomato paste.

At dinner, we started with a side. The roasted brussels sprouts (\$8) were seared with meaty pieces of bacon and drizzled in a sherry-honey mixture that was reminiscent of an aged balsamic.

My grilled Scottish salmon (\$18) with charred broccoli and dill crème fraiche was so expertly cooked I would have sworn I was in Citrus and not in a new neighborhood bar. The fish was cooked to a spot-on medium and the tangy herb sauce was the perfect foil for the salmon's characteristic richness.

The tagliatelle carbonara (\$14) also belied the location. The housemade pasta was tossed with guanciale (a bacon riff of cured pork jowl or cheeks), local eggs, pecorino and roasted broccoli.

The other two entrees I sampled — beef short rib tacos (\$17) and meatloaf (\$16) — brought us back to expected tavern fare. Some assembly was required with the tacos, which were presented on a board. The tender meat came with warm tortillas, fresh guac, crazy-good smashed red beans, a fab lime crema, fresh salsa and pickled jalapeno. The pork in the butcher's blend for the meatloaf was top-notch.

For something sweet we liked the carrot cake (\$7), but the two scoops of housemade ice creams (\$6) really impressed. The malt chocolate flavor and the Elvis-inspired concoction with bacon and bananas were similar to frozen custards.

The North Quarter continues to diversify. The addition of a tavern has added a real feel of community to the mix.

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