

let's do lunch

The Mint Restaurant



By Fred Benton
Food Editor

Okay, I've read all the media hype on The Mint.

And all this attention has given this new restaurant located on Fayetteville Street, across from the Raleigh City Museum in the Brigg's Hardware Building, a celebrity complex: adulation followed by harping criticism. I've read terms like "crown jewel" and "work of art" and later in the same publication, they dethroned The Mint for no real reason. Was this stuff written by the same hacks who think you can actually order breakfast at Tiffany's?

First of all, it's a restaurant, not the second coming. So let's examine The

Mint under a clearer microscope: it's a grand, upscale restaurant located in a upfit bank building owned by the City. The entrance retains the bank's six-ton vault door and has a private dining room that once held the bank's money. There's the schtick; the drama that's supposed to set Raleigh on its ear. And no, I don't think The Mint is overpriced. The pricing is fair based on the overhead and the quality of the ingredients, which after speaking with executive chef, Jeremy Clayman, are even more impressive than at first glance.

Now, as far as the food. My personal favorite on the lunch menu? Truffled Mac and Cheese that features ziti pasta, cheddar cheese, broccoli, bacon and lots of minced black truffle (\$9). This was absolutely buttery and superb and yes, I would go back in a slap for this preparation. Another laudable dish here is Butternut Squash

Soup (\$8) with the addition of apples, spiced rum and maple syrup. The presentation truly makes the dish — poured at the table from a white china teapot into a deep white bowl. Silky smooth texture and definitive taste marked by unusual service: a definite winner! My lunch companions, RD publisher Crash Gregg, David Diaz from the Downtown Raleigh Alliance, and Kenji Tamashiro, of the upcoming Waraji downtown, also commented on the impeccable service and enjoyed their lunch selections.

Almost all of the lunch dishes were around or under \$10, which is surprising considering the preconceived expectations from all the fluff about

prices. The only more expensive lunch item was the 8 oz. filet mignon for \$22, but opt for the 6 oz. and it's only \$15 for a very nicely prepared filet and sides.

The day we had lunch, a good crowd mix was there, ranging from suits having a power lunch meeting to young couples enjoying a casual meal together.

I liked The Mint. Raleigh, relax and enjoy The Mint for what it is: a great place to dine downtown if you want to be pampered! ■RD

QUICK BYTES: THE MINT

**821 Fayetteville Street
Downtown Raleigh
919.821-0011**

Lunch hours: Monday - Friday 11:30am to 3:30pm
Dinner hours: Tuesday - Saturday 6:00pm to 10pm

Reservations: Yes, recommended

Average Lunch Check: \$12

Take Out: Yes

Off-Premise Catering Available: No

Noise Level: Low

Private Dining / Meeting Space: Yes (up to 14)

Wireless Internet: Yes

Low Carb Menu Choices: Yes

Vegetarian Choices: Yes

Smoking Area: Yes, outside on large terrace

Full Bar: Yes

Outdoor Dining: Yes

Web Site: www.themintrestaurant.com

Parking: Lunch: Street or Moore Square Parking Deck,
Dinner: complimentary valet service

