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culture



Scene: Cuisine

It's No Ordinary Railroad Junction



Above: Inside the dining room of JCT Kitchen & Bar

(Left to right): The soon-to-be-famous JCT burger and fries; upstairs at JCT Bar; everything about JCT is chic but welcoming.

Photography by Lou Freeman Photography

JCT Kitchen & Bar
1198 Howell Mill Road
404.355.2252
jctkitchen.com

If you haven't noticed, there are railroad tracks right behind the Westside Urban Market on Howell Mill Road, and that's how the owners of **JCT Kitchen & Bar** came up with the name—the abbreviation for a railroad junction. Executive Chef Ford Fry, who's from Texas and served as corporate chef for Eatzi's Market & Bakery, calls JCT's menu "authentic Southern farmstead cooking."

Fry's food philosophy leans heavily on the use of locally grown seasonal ingredients. "Farmstead is a culinary term currently used in artisan cheesemaking, where the dairy comes from the same farm where the cheese is made," he says. "I like the word because it indicates handcrafted food and use of local farms."

At first glance, the menu reads like a Southern roadside meat-and-three with fried chicken, shrimp and grits, and braised short ribs with roasted vegetables. But this kitchen prepares down-home food with a decidedly uptown flair by using classic European cooking techniques and a comfortably cool setting. It's definitely more bistro than grandma's kitchen when you share an order of parmesan-truffle fries, red wine braised chicken and wood-grilled Maine lobster rolls. The dessert menu is unabashedly fancy farm food, with a warm skillet apple tart and a big slice of chocolate cake served with a tall glass of cold milk. To keep an eye on the railroad tracks and watch a sunset with drink in hand, head up to the skyline terrace, JCT Bar, which offers small Southern plates and live music on weekend nights. This is a junction where it all comes together. —CAROLYN O'NEIL