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SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2010  
FOOD, IN THIS ISSUE..., ATLANTA

## Fly away with me

### 57th Fighter Group Restaurant celebrates the past and the present



PHOTOS/LIZ BARCLAY

#### Dining Essentials

57th Fighter Group Restaurant  
3829 Clairmont Road  
770-234-0057  
www.the57threstaurant.com

Hours: Lunch: Mon.-Sat., 11 a.m.-2:30 p.m.;  
dinner: Mon.-Thu. 5-10 p.m., Fri.-Sat., 5-11  
p.m. and Sun. 5-9 p.m.; brunch: Sun. 10  
a.m.-3 p.m.

Reservations: Recommended but not  
required

Dress: Business casual to whatever's  
comfortable

Cost: Lunch entrées range \$7-13; dinner  
entrées range \$14-30.

Alcohol: Full bar

Parking: Free onsite lot

By Hope S. Philbrick

Want a slice of history alongside your meal? Head to 57th Fighter Club Restaurant, where the spotlight shines on the 1940s World War II.

Military jeeps, fighter planes and sandbags set the scene outdoors. The building is designed to resemble a bombed-out French farmhouse, and on the inside it's decorated with era-specific memorabilia, historic photographs and a "Wall of Heroes" that's autographed by veterans. Recordings of some of Winston Churchill's speeches play inside the "latrine."

Located at the edge of Atlanta's DeKalb-Peachtree (PDK) Airport—the second busiest airport in the state of Georgia—the 57th Fighter Group Restaurant boasts spectacular runway views. While in the lounge, main dining room or on the patio, odds are that you'll witness multiple take-offs and landings. Aviation enthusiasts can even listen to the local air traffic through headsets positioned throughout the restaurant. The ambiance is thus a unique blend of historic and contemporary times.

"The restaurant was built in 1981," says General Manager Tricia Clancy. "It closed in 2006. It was purchased by Mr. Pat Epps and reopened in 2009." The building was renovated and refreshed, and a new menu that emphasizes American comfort was put into action.

"The environment drew me [here]," says Chef Dennis Davis, a graduate of the culinary program at the Art Institute of Atlanta whose resume includes stints with Fifth Group Restaurants. "I had an affinity for the history and culture of this place. It speaks to a lot of people. It's really neat to see the 'Wall of Heroes' and see a lot of veterans come in and get to sign it. It's one of the few places I've ever worked at where it's more than the experience of being at the restaurant. It speaks to me personally; I'm definitely very proud to be a part of it."

The menu is influenced by the season, though some items like beer-cheese soup are in high demand

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and thus remain available throughout the year. "We make it with Sam Adams," says Davis about the restaurant's signature item. "It's a simple creamy, roux-based, beer-fortified béchamel, basically. I'm amazed that even in the heat of summer we go through tons of it."

Calamari has taken the appetizer menu by storm: "We just put that on two weeks ago," says Davis, "and I'm going through 100 pounds a week. I never imagined it would be as popular as it is. But even I love it, so what can I say?" Rueben sandwiches are the most popular lunch option. Hot-ticket dinner choices include Winston chicken, which is a grilled breast topped with ham, bacon, sharp cheddar cheese and rooster sauce (a combination of barbecue and honey-mustard sauces); Chilean sea bass, which is pan seared and served with cheddar grits, sautéed spinach, tomato-olive salad and a yellow pepper reduction; and seafood fettuccini, which features salmon and shrimp.

When creating the new cocktail menu "we tried to make it fun," says Clancy. "We came up with some [playful] names" that fit the restaurant theme such as Rosie the Riveter, D-Day Dirty Martini, B52, Kamikaze and more. In addition to the full bar, beers and several wines by the glass and bottle are available.

"We have a very active Facebook page and get tremendous support from fans," says Clancy. "People were so excited about our reopening. Just read the comments, they're so nice, so many wonderful memories."

"We appeal in a different way to each age group," says Clancy. "We get a lot of birthday parties, rehearsal dinners, wedding showers, retirement luncheons and other events." Dances, team trivia and other special events draw regulars as well as attract new fans.

Visit 57th Fighter Club Restaurant, and one thing is certain: Odds are, you'll be dining alongside history buffs, aviation enthusiasts, military families, veterans and curious Atlantans. **SP**

Rating:



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[www.the57threstaurant.com](http://www.the57threstaurant.com)