

THE SUNDAY PAPER™

DECEMBER 5-11, 2004

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

ONLINE: sundaypaper.com

Free up your week.

Full of

Grace

Norcross restaurant a worthy OTP find

BY JENNIFER SOONG

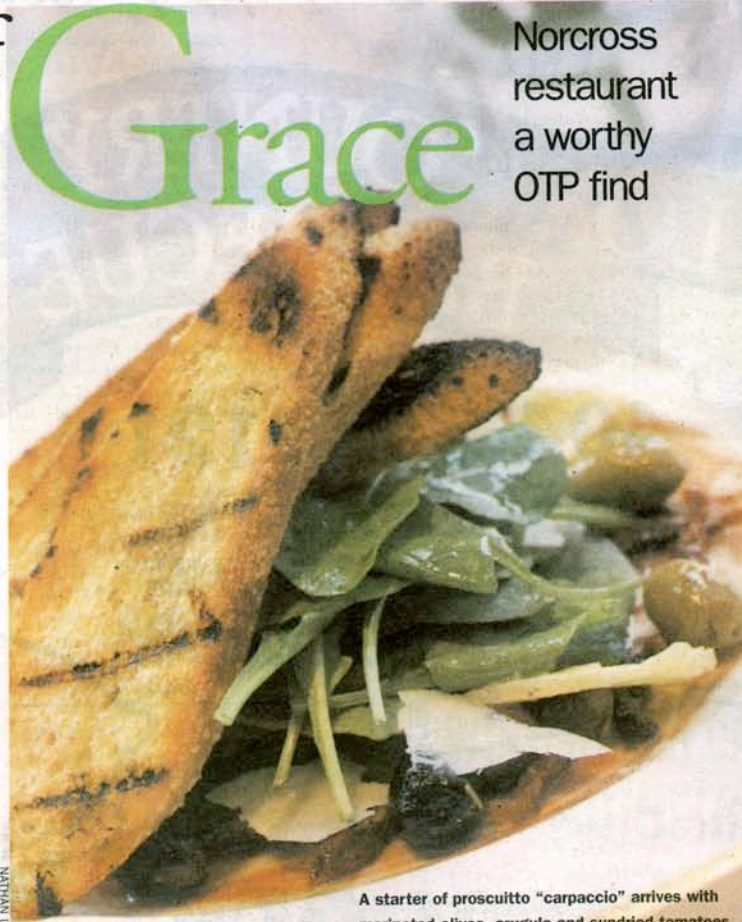
During the recent election, the map was divided between red and blue states. But here in Greater Atlanta, there's an even more pronounced distinction: inside and outside the Perimeter (OTP).

Admittedly, as a city snob, I am reluctant to travel OTP in search of good food—even really, really good food. So when my editor asked me to review Grace 17.20 in Norcross, I was somewhat peeved. But swallowing my pride, I schlepped all the way to Gwinnett—and what I discovered made me shut up.

Grace 17.20, which opened its doors in September, shines with a true connoisseur's touch and a decidedly chic presentation. You'll find it sandwiched in the Forum, an upscale shopping center with mainstays like Talbot's, Orvis and New Balance. The "17.20" in the name refers to a Bible passage that, roughly paraphrased, says "With a grain of faith, you can move mountains."

Chef Charles Schwab's New American cuisine plays up familiar dishes such as pan-roasted salmon and prime rib-eye, but there are also a number of welcome surprises like vegetable cassoulet and sautéed grouper with a pea ragout. The appetizers, ranging from roasted beet Napoleon to eggplant bruschetta, are all tempting.

Our server, charming with a loquacious streak, convinces us to go with a seafood selection. "Baltimore doesn't know how to make crab cakes," he laughs with a wave of his



A starter of prosciutto "carpaccio" arrives with marinated olives, arugula and sundried tomatoes.

hand, indicating his dismissal. How right he is.

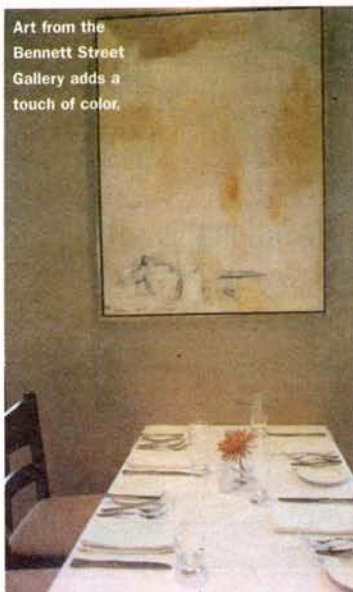
The jumbo lump crab cake—generously portioned so you can share—is delightful down to the last meaty bite. Our server even brings us a second bread basket to sop up the heavenly sauce.

The chef's presentation is as beautifully executed as the cooking. Grilled duck breast with shitake mushrooms and baby bok choy strikes a delicate balance of richness and flavor. The melt-in-your-mouth seared scallops are soaked in a creamy sauce with sweet corn poblano chili relish and finished in a ginger glaze. Wine lovers will appreciate the discerning selection perfect for pairings.

Grace's desserts, most accompanied with a scoop of homemade ice cream, capture the imagination and the sweet tooth: pear baklava with caramel ice cream, chocolate ganache crepe with espresso ice cream. An ideal autumn treat, the apple-cranberry tart with cinnamon ice cream hits the spot.

On a recent Friday evening, the crowd—a mix of city dwellers and suburbanites—appears to be having a delightful time. When a glamorously garbed woman at an adjacent table takes a bite of cheesecake, she starts chanting, "I love to eat, I love to eat." And I couldn't agree more. **SP**

Art from the Bennett Street Gallery adds a touch of color.



NATHAN LENZ

DINING ESSENTIALS

Grace 17.20

5155 Peachtree Parkway

Norcross, GA 30092

(678) 421-1720

www.grace1720.com

Neighborhood: Norcross

Hours: Mon-Sat, Lunch: 11:30am-4:30pm; Dinner: 5:30pm-11pm

Reservations: Call ahead

Dress code: Casual to dressy

Cuisine: New American

Alcohol: Full bar

Cost: Dinner, appetizers \$7-\$14; entrees \$14-\$36

Credit cards: All major

Outdoor seating: Yes

Parking: Lot