



TASTE BUDS

TASTE

SMALL PLATES + CRAFT COCKTAILS



Easton's new restaurant Taste offers small plates and craft cocktails. A few recommendations for ordering:

- Servers recommend 2 to 3 plates per person. Order 3.
- Order plates to share with a group.
- Opt for cocktails over beer or wine.
- Save room for dessert.

Story by Sarah Ensor | Photos by Caroline J. Phillips



Recently, I implemented a rule for myself when dining out: order the thing you can't get anywhere. For example, I recently selected a poached egg dish served with fried oysters (unusual) over a poached egg dish served with crab cakes (standard, in our region, at least).

Secondary to this rule is to order the thing that is done better at that establishment than any other restaurant.

This rule has served me well. Order the porterhouse at the steakhouse, the chocolate cake served with cr me fraiche from the restaurant without a printed dessert menu, and the escargot prepared by a chef expert in French cuisine.

At Taste, it is easy to follow both of these rules. A full menu of craft cocktails offer plenty of options for ordering the thing you can't get

anywhere else, and the drinks are beautifully executed.

The Taste gimlet served with egg white foam and lime zest is a refreshing, crisp, citrus drink with tang and texture that make this twisted classic special. Similarly, the desert pear margarita is a gorgeous twist on a classic. I typically order margaritas only in locally owned Mexican restaurants. They tend to be too heavy on sour mix and have a syrupy texture in other settings. Not so at Taste. The fuchsia cocktail rimmed with black salt is immediately pleasing to the eye. It is light, refreshing, and not at all sour.

"I feel like just drinking it makes me feel cool," said Caroline J. Phillips, the photographer for this piece.

By far my favorite is also perhaps the most dangerous of the cocktails,

the blueberry bees knees. Incredibly smooth, the slightly sweet beverage is a gorgeous balance of blueberry, honey and lemon. Be careful of the sting; the gin is silent.

For small plates, one can barely order wrong here. Many dishes are unique to the restaurant, so there is only one strong recommendation: in your mix of plates, include the salmon belly with pickled onions, and scallions served on an herb pancake with soy vinaigrette. The Korean flavors in this dish coupled with crispy salmon belly is spectacular.

For those who prefer a milder dish, the arctic char with lightly caramelized diced sweet potatoes and pomegranate seeds is a lovely mix of comforting and bright. These flavors are not often combined and work well. This would be particularly nice for a rainy afternoon



afternoon lunch when one is just beginning to think of autumn.

The grilled octopus served over a bed of arugula with marinated tomatoes, shaved celery, and charred sourdough croutons is salty and refreshing. The arugula adds a peppery counterpart to the salty octopus, and the various textures in this dish make what would be simple flavors – pepper, salt, basil, oregano – interesting. This makes a great start to a meal, although the appetizers are also well worth ordering.

Consider starting with deviled eggs and a few options from the vegetable portion of the menu. The roasted mushrooms with thyme, manchego and savoy, served under a puff pastry are the definition of comfort food. Any mushroom lover will be thrilled with this dish.

Brussels sprouts, popular the past few years at restaurants, at Taste are served with caramelized onion and citrus. The citrus separates these roasted sprouts from those at other restaurants. Far from the oily, heavily salted fare (that, let's be honest, are absolutely delicious), these Brussels sprouts are bright, helped by the citrus, and light.

Shishito peppers are quickly growing in popularity and making their way onto restaurant menus. Still, not every restaurant serves them, and they are excellently prepared here with smoked sea salt and olive oil and served with a spicy red sauce. Though not impossible to find, they're not at many restaurants, and they are great for sharing.

Your meal at Taste will be a lingering experience. It's the type of place you go to celebrate a birthday with friends or to catch up and talk. Finish your meal by sharing dessert. Order the thing you can't get everywhere: I will long remember the fried banana cheesecake, even

though I am usually ambivalent about cheesecake in general. The Taste dish, if available, is wrapped, fried and full of cinnamon and great textures.

One last rule: forget my rules, and order what calls to you. Bon appetit. **S**



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