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
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Charleston--Alluette's, delurking to rave

Our first visit to Charleston, travelling from metro NY region for a long weekend mini-vacation, and I came prepared with a good-sized list of recommendations from Chowhound to fit our needs (moderate to bargain, walking distance from historic district). We're still here until Monday, but I had to de-lurk and write my first Chowhound post to exclaim in amazement about the dinner we just had at Alluette's Cafe, which I discovered not on Chowhound but through a blog posting on Holly Herrick's blog, Charleston Chow (<http://charlestonchow.blogspot.com/>)

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In the Boards

We were the sole diners on a Saturday night (at least while we were there), and this just should not be. For \$60, including a generous tip, we had a meal that paralleled in quality and skill of preparation anything I have ever had for more than double the price.

The restaurant focuses on fresh, local and often organic ingredients. Alluette's philosophy of good food means that the restaurant concentrates on seasonal vegetables, chicken and fish, prepared simply but expertly. I dislike 'cleverness' in restaurant cooking, and this restaurant demonstrates that excellent ingredients and thoughtful, minimalist preparation produces the most outstanding results.

My partner started with a cup of fish stew; it was jumping off the spoon with fresh fish flavor, in a simply seasoned tomato base with excellent body. My partner proclaimed: "This is better than any clam chowder I've ever had, just with fish instead of clams." Well ... okay... Anyway, we were both immediately impressed with the quality coming from the kitchen.

The restaurant is still building a clientele, and consequently the dinner menu is simply the lunch menu with one special. That night it was fried shrimp, served with choice of two sides. I had collard greens and organic potato salad. A dozen sweet, juicy shrimp arrived. Greaseless, slightly crisp; they appeared to have been dredged in seasoned flour only. I could detect a light touch of dill weed. Alluette served them with 'Geechee girl sauce,' a cayenne-seasoned mayonnaise. The collard greens had been lightly stewed with onions and peppers; I could have eaten a quart of them. The potato salad was also flawless.

When Alluette heard that we had come all the way from New York to eat at her restaurant, based on a blog posting on the internet? Well--she offered to make us something not on the menu. My partner jumped at the offer of fresh flounder. Alluette mentioned 'baked flounder', but what arrived at the table was a gorgeous and fearsomely fresh whole flounder, dusted with cornmeal and fried as expertly as the shrimp. Unlike the shrimp, the flounder had a distinct crunchy crust from the cornmeal dredging. This was also served with

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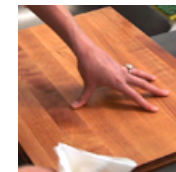
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geechee girl sauce. Since the flounder took up the whole plate, a separate plate came with the same lovely collards and sweet potato slices panfried with slivers of sweet red onion. The chef's choice of sides was in my view another example of how smart this lady is about food. They were excellent accompaniments to the fish, both in flavor and texture.

At this time the restaurant is not serving liquor; they offered as beverages (in keeping with the holistic foods philosophy) homemade, juice-sweetened ice tea or a selection of juices or water.

At 80 Reid, near the corner of Market and less than half a block from King St., the location is not heavily trafficked. The exterior is unassuming to say the least, in a small strip mall. However the interior, half a dozen tables and simply furnished, is cheerful and has a modest charm, with paintings from local artists for sale on two walls. We also noticed a patio seating area off the side, with screening for intimacy and to remove from view the urban surroundings of the block.

Even though I don't live in this area, I really hope that Alluette's Cafe gets the attention and business it heartily deserves. She tells me that they are showcasing local blues musicians on Wednesday and Friday nights, as well. Hope some of you can check out the restaurant and spread the word.



[jilbur](#) Apr 12, 2008 09:05PM

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5 replies so far

We are headed to Charleston on the 18th. Is it a BYOB? Sounds like amazing food. You had me with the collards until you said they had peppers in

them.



crazyspice Apr 13, 2008

07:50AM

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1.

You know, I have no idea re: crazyspice
about BYOB--I would
assume it's okay, but I suppose the best thing to
do would be to phone and ask.



jilbur Apr 14, 2008

07:52PM

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1.

Thanks to Jibur's post, we ate re: jilbur
there today for brunch. It is every
bit as good as the description. We loved the tea
with pineapple juice, the fresh shrimp salad (that
she peeled and de-veined after we ordered it),
collards, and bread pudding. She was out of the
fish stew, sadly. They were empty except for
one other table, also sadly; although it gave us
the opportunity to talk alot with the waitress,
cook, and Alluette herself. Her personality and
the restaurant's back story/mission (ie locally
grown food and organics) really made the place
stand out from the pack.

I'd also add, just in case you aren't in the mood
for bread pudding, that the restaurant is only a
few short blocks on King from both Cupcake (a
wonderful cupcake bakery) and Paulo's (the
best gelato I've had in ages.)

[Permalink](#) |



[wellfedreids](#) Apr 20, [Reply](#)

2008 07:11PM

2.

Thanks for the tip. We went for dinner on a visit to Charleston last weekend and it was everything you said. The collards were not too peppery, just well flavored and the lightly fried whiting was outstanding. They were out of fish stew this night as well. Loved the sweet tea almost as much as the conversation with Miss Alluette and Cliff, who were very gracious and happy to talk to the outsiders about Charleston politics. The patio space is lovely and evidently they have live jazz there on Wednesday and Friday. We don't drink, so also don't know about BYOB.

Too full for dessert, I still couldn't resist buying her last brownie for later. Believe me, I know from brownies and this was heaven--deep rich chocolate that was just the right texture between cakey & chewy.

Sadly, when we went (about 7:00 on a Friday), we were the only patrons, so do get the word out--although she said she's going to be featured on the Food Network on July, so that will boost business.



[oya](#) Apr 24, 2008 05:09AM

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3.

I went here this past weekend, and have to say, it was quite good. For anyone not from the area, be advised that it's a bit far from the normal tourist part of downtown, but there is parking there if you have a car.

We had the fish soup and the lima bean soup to start. Both were superb. I had the whole fried

whiting which was also excellent, and my girlfriend had the crabcakes. The crab had been caught fresh by the owner, and the crabcakes were among the best I've ever tasted--the perfect ratio of crab to filler. Easily the highlight of the meal.

Also, try the tea--it was superb.



[aravenel](#) May 28, 2008

[Permalink](#) |

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07:10AM

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