

Brown & Loe

A new spot serves up classic comfort food in the River Market district

By Kirsten Hudson



It's Friday night. The bell of the new Kansas City streetcar chimes as it whirs by the entrance to City Market. Tomorrow, the market will come to life as people flock in from all over the metro to buy fruits and veggies, sample artisan sweets, and shop for fresh cut flowers and handmade crafts from the region's largest farmers market. But tonight it's a calm Midwest evening in the River Market neighborhood.

Big band music drifts over the humid air. Silverware clinks softly. Nestled into the southeast corner of City Market square, Brown & Loe, 429 Walnut St., looks like it's been serving upscale American fare for years instead of just hosting its grand opening Aug. 2, 2016.

The restaurant fills the long-vacant Merchants Bank Building, which was constructed in the 1920s. Servers wearing canvas aprons waltz in and out of the door leading to the restaurant's new patio, which sits right next to Dutch Flowers.

If you look up, you'll see two restored enamel signs—a larger one on the north side and a smaller one on the west. Both light

up the Brown & Loe name, previously a produce broker that operated on the second floor of the building in the 1940s, it was the inspiration for the restaurant's identity.

A warm welcome

When I walk in, it's all dark wood and coiffured ceilings with an elegant, but welcoming feel. The hostess leads me across the faded checkerboard floor to a booth along a bank of windows facing the fully stocked bar, which runs the length of the narrow room. Vintage diner signs illuminating the words "Eat" and "Drink" straddle either side of a large, chippy-paint mirror overlooking the bar.

The menu is American comfort food with a Southern twist. Pan roasted chicken. Grilled short ribs with brown butter cornbread. Dry aged



pork chop with apple fennel slaw. There are a few quirks thrown in the mix, too. Like a chocolate or cherry phosphate, a carbonated drink from soda fountain days. I order the blue corn trout with creamed sweet corn and the watercress salad.

As I sip a glass of wine, my waiter tells me how the renovations to create the restaurant brought out the building's historic architectural details. The marble, which lines the walls, is original to the building. And, the marble steps that now lead to the restrooms in the basement were excavated after being walled off for years.

There are even three repurposed vaults hidden away that hail from the building's original days as a bank. The vault in the basement has been transformed into a cooler, and two on the main level are now a part of the kitchen.

Classic comfort cuisine

The food is classic comfort food—taken up a notch—and I feel full and happy. The ambiance is casual and unhurried, so I opt for dessert.

As my waiter sets down a Dixie Pie, a miniature pie filled with bourbon chocolate ganache, toasted pecans, bourbon cherry compote and

topped with vanilla bean ice cream, the sky begins to darken outside the windows.

More patrons walk through the doors to head to the bar or just sit down for dessert and I can't help but feel that Brown & Loe is just the local spot that was needed.

Kirsten Hudson loves discovering new restaurants in Kansas City—especially if they have a vintage style or story. Check out her home decorating ideas and DIY projects on her blog, Red Leaf Style, at redleafstyle.com.

