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Roast Chicken

Of The Era

Ellington's Mid Way Bar & Grill brings an updated twist to 1970s Southern fare.

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PHOTOS BY **NATHAN ZUCKER**

ELLINGTON'S

"Midway Bar & Grill"

ELLINGTON'S MID WAY BAR & GRILL

401 Union St., 4th flr.
615-988-7333
ellingtons.restaurant

What to order:

Pickled deviled eggs, \$9
The Wedge, \$12
Squid ink bucatini, \$29
Pork chop, \$28
Carrot cake, \$9

When The Fairlane Hotel took over the bank building at the corner of 4th and Union, it embraced the modernist style of that circa-1972 structure. Its lobby is appointed with sleek, retro-modern elements and furnishings of the late '60s and early '70s—a little bit *Mad Men*, a little bit *American Hustle*. And, its fine dining restaurant, Ellington's Mid Way Bar & Grill, on the fourth floor, follows suit. Exit the elevator and walk down the smoked mirror-lined hallway, where a receptionist will greet you in a space that was once the bankers' private executive suites. To your immediate right is the bar, trimmed in a big brass railing. The dining room is done in earth tones of browns, dark greens, orange, and gold, with an interplay of warm woods, metals, and stone. Outside is a breezy wraparound terrace, one of the best perches in downtown Nashville for unwinding above the fray.

This swank setting warrants a cocktail. For sure, the Three Martini Lunch, spiked with caviar and smoked Himalayan salt, fits the vibe. (It's not on the regular menu, but make the request.) The Governor, honoring The Fairlane's in-house concierge, affectionately called "The Governor," is primed with Belle Meade sour mash, amaro arancia, chicory, and Creole bitters—ideal for smooth sipping on the terrace.

Chef Edgar Pendley (opening executive chef and still partner, Urban Grub) consulted on the project and designed a menu peppered with of-a-time fare that's been given a refresh. Like the shrimp cocktail—dill-coated jumbos from the Gulf, iced in a cool glass coupe with charred lemon, horseradish, and black-eyed pea aioli. Deviled eggs are reimagined: Pendley pickles them first, for a piquant twist, and caps 'em with apple-bacon jam. A bowl of fried cheese curds with a curry-spiked green goddess sauce is a guilty pleasure.





As you'd expect, the menu has The Wedge salad, but here, it's more than a wedge—it's the whole iceberg head: carved out, shredded, and folded with pork belly, pickled cherry tomatoes, roasted shallot, and Kenny's Barren County Bleu refilling the hollow. That same Green Goddess drenches the salad to great effect.

Housemade pastas always pique our interest, and Pendley offers two creative ones: Cavatelli with smoked lamb shank, butternut squash, and field peas, and an astonishing squid ink bucatini twirled with blue crab, lemon, and dill.

You can't miss when ordering one of the extravagant, and absolutely shareable, dry aged steaks, like the grilled New York strip, dabbled in pink peppercorn chimichurri. Lamb and pork chops are also sumptuous. The pork is a juicy, double-cut chop that benefits from a brine and beautiful char, finished with bourbon-smoked peaches. For a side dish, get the asparagus vinaigrette, or the broccoli rice gratin—both are perfect throwbacks to the era.

Carrot cake came into the limelight in the '70s; Pendley serves it with hot cream cheese icing. But he delved further back in time for his roasted banana pudding in Italian meringue bowl, a treasured recipe of his grandmother's, updated with a blowtorch brûlée.

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