

bon appétit

The
THANKSGIVING
KITCHEN



Make-Ahead SOUR-CREAM MASHED POTATOES
Cornbread Sausage STUFFING • *Broccoli* CAESAR SALAD
STIR-FRIED BRUSSELS SPROUTS *with* Walnuts
Umami-Spiked GRAVY • *Butterscotch Pecan* TORTE





Where the Ladies Dance Downstairs

Tiny Lou's may be new, but its design elements bring to life a vivid past

by ANGELA HANSBERGER

► **THERE'S ALWAYS** been a story to tell at Hotel Clermont. According to Atlanta lore, Al Capone once hid out in a room, and punk rocker GG Allin may or may not have died in another. In the basement sits the Clermont Lounge, Atlanta's first and longest-operating strip club. Formerly a swank dinner-and-a-show destination known as the Gypsy Room, it remains today a gritty but historic stronghold, where cash is king and cameras forbidden. Anthony Bourdain visited regularly to see dancer Blondie crush cans with her, ahem, cans. Mumford & Sons got kicked out. Morgan Freeman didn't.

The hotel upstairs eventually

The hotel upstairs eventually fell into disrepair, and health inspectors shut it down in 2009. But nearly a decade later, Hotel Clermont has renovated and reopened with a rooftop bar and a French-American brasserie called **Tiny Lou's**. Rather than hiding its past, the space revels in it: Every design element speaks to the near century of history tucked between its walls.

We caught up with Hotel Clermont director of restaurants Nick Hassiotis and interior designer Laura Flam of Reunion Goods & Services, the NYC-based firm that handled the redesign, for all the juicy details.

THE NEON SIGNAGE

"We wanted Tiny Lou's to be a special, fun, sexy place," Flam says, noting the glowing logo mounted above the staircase. "It's like a bug light pulling you in," Hassiotis adds.



The Banquettes

“A lot of French restaurants feel dark, heavy, masculine,” Hassiotis says. “We wanted these curvy velvet banquettes to feel light. The color keeps things warm and bright.”

The Wallpaper

Iconic Georgia peaches, double entendre optional.

The Plates

Tiny Lou’s takes its name from a dancer who performed downstairs in the 1950s. Promotional posters called her “the girl who refused to dance with Hitler,” though no one’s exactly sure why. Elisabeth McNair of the Atlanta-based design team Office of Brothers illustrated Lou for the dinner plates and menus.



The Dessert Cart

Found at auction, this circa-1950s brass cart once roamed Quo Vadis, one of those NYC see-and-be-seen restaurants. “Julia Child and James Beard ate there. Mick Jagger was one of the few allowed to dine without proper attire,” Hassiotis says. “It saw some of the food world’s greats. We’re just continuing the tradition.”



The Dessert

Lou may have gotten the name, but the Clermont’s most famous dancer-in-residence is Anita Rae Strange, a.k.a. Blondie. Nicknamed for her trademark platinum wig, she’s been performing for more than three decades and is still going strong at 61. Pastry chef Claudia Martinez pays homage in the form of dessert: the Ode to Blondie is a brown butter blondie with buttermilk ice cream, hazelnut crèmeux, and curried bananas flambé. “Blondie is simply a classic,” she says. “Everyone in Atlanta knows who she is, and she has not changed or tried to be anything else for anyone.”



The Check Presenters

On the glossy black check trays, the script reads “*Au-dessus où les dames dansent*,” which translates to “Above where the ladies dance.” McNair drew the crossed legs of a skirted woman holding a cocktail over a peacock-blue background. “We wanted to name the upstairs bar the Peacock Room,” Hassiotis says, “but it was trademarked.”



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