

Though I only spent an evening in Wilmington, I was surprised to discover how the city had developed. Tucked between Trenton, Philadelphia, and DC, this bustling town is seeing a resurgence in food culture and locals working to craft its own identity amongst these established metropolitan centers.

I arrived at their station mid day, eager to check in and rest after a busy northeast tour. The team from Wilmington had invited me to dinner at Bardea and I wanted to relax before the big night. I dropped my bags and strolled over to a pharmacy to pick up some travel remedies and a good face mask. I can not emphasize how important self care is during a trip this long and that starts with carving out time to care for one's body.

After a sound sleep and some skin care, I walked over to grab a beer with travel writer Amy Cherry before dinner. We met at Stitch House Brewery, a local brew pub with adventurous beers. Though Maine and Boston was home to many porters, stouts, and IPAs Stitch House gave me a curious and refreshing hibiscus infused lighter option I really enjoyed. Amy and I talked over the trip thus far and what was next on the horizon. When I told her I was headed to Bardea she gushed over their menu and told me I was going to love it. I had no idea how correct she would be.



Scott Stein and Antimo DiMeo crafted Bardea with a focus on featuring local farms and providers. A modern take on Italian classics made in a bustling scratch kitchen served in an environment both elegant and minimal. Antimo welcomed me into the kitchen with open arms and invited me to take in the sights and smells. Though the ticket printer spat out order after order while we conversed over prep, the team met the rush with calculated excellence.





We sampled a number of fantastic dishes, most notably dry aged lamb skewers, ricotta gnocchi, and paccheri. The ricotta gnocchi turned out to be a real treat, soft sweet salty goodness burst forth with each bite. Antimo had reworked this from a previous iteration into a dish that is a favorite for many fine dining locals. The paccheri was decadent yet well balanced with short rib deeply braised and packed full of flavor. There is a clear reason why Bardea is named Wilmington's best by so many reviewers. The vision manifested by this team is unstoppable.



I sat down for dinner with Scott Ciancio, Director of Marketing for the Visitor's Bureau. As the wine flowed and courses followed, we mused over the future of Wilmington and how their food scene had developed of late. I believe there is a lot of potential there. A number of foodies had gone into develop DE.CO, a new food hall offering a myriad of cuisines, some very new to the locals. Just across the way a historic theater showed offerings of Broadway shows, big name musicians, and comedy acts. It was apparent that as this city blooms, Mr. Ciancio would be there to usher in new visitors. He applies himself fully to curate and emulate the best parts of his city in a way that will make newcomers incredibly welcome.



The downtown area is walkable, well lit, with a number of busses running through the corridors early and late. With strategic public transportation development and a focus on providing transportation to those in the hospitality industry, Wilmington will grow.

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