

# Sweet Georgia Brown showcases Detroit on the move

BY ELEANOR HEALD  
CORRESPONDENT

Sweet Georgia Brown in Detroit opened with a splash in June 2002.

Reservations were at a premium and they still are, especially on weekends.

That's good. The bloom is not off this rose.

Location in the popular Greektown district gives it a big city feel — like Manhattan or Chicago. No shouts of Oopa, however, and even with the Southern-sounding name, no soul food.

Adding charm though, are a few Southern dishes such as Fried Plantain Chips, Wedge Salad, Southern Comfort Pork Chops, Praline Baked Sweet Potato with Honey Butter and Georgia Peach Cobbler.

The rest of the menu is upbeat American classics with international underpinnings served in a refined, sophisticated, stylish, white-tablecloth ambience. The modish decor draws on global influences with paintings of American jazz greats, indigenous African wood doors, Caribbean stone and handcrafted Italian furnishings. Dressy, business-casual attire is the norm but once you settle in to your table with handmade chairs or a plush banquette, the well-trained service staff makes you feel right at home and downright comfortable.

## SETTING A MOOD

If you want to be entertained during dinner, request a table near the grand piano, where jazz piano lives up the bar-lounge area every Tuesday through Thursday. A jazz trio plays Friday and Saturday evenings and at Sunday brunch. If conversation is your preference, ask for a table in a quieter section of the restaurant. Oversize tables in the 180-seat restaurant are available to accommodate large groups.

President and Managing Partner Frank Taylor, late of The Parkway Grille at the Detroit Marriott Pontiac at Centerpoint, brings more than 20 years of restaurant management experience to Sweet



Sweet Georgia Brown Chef Jerry Nottage with his signature Crab and Shrimp Cake.

Georgia Brown. He is the partner of Detroit resident LaVan Hawkins, who has been associated with the food industry for a quarter century.

"Our team's goal," Taylor said, "is to provide our guests with unparalleled service and quality. I want everyone to enjoy an unforgettable dining experience at Sweet Georgia Brown." And the team is doing that with a distinctly Detroit's-on-the-move feel.

## SIGNATURE DELIGHTS

Sweet Georgia Brown's Executive Chef Jerry Nottage, also late of The Parkway Grille, has designed a menu with what have already become signature dishes.

Count him in as part of the perceived Detroit feel. Taylor

was influential in bringing Detroit native Chef Jerry from his position in Houston, Texas, to the Parkway Grille and then to Sweet Georgia Brown.

After graduation from Detroit Kettering High School, the now 42-year-old Chef Jerry went on to graduate from the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, N.Y. Meeting them at The Parkway, I sensed that Taylor would not open a restaurant without Chef Jerry in the kitchen. As it turns out, that hunch was correct.

Among Chef Jerry's signature menu items are his Crab and Shrimp Cake, which can be ordered either as an appetizer or as a main plate. This pure lump crab and shrimp cake, without any bread crumb binder, is served atop a beef-

steak tomato with fried spinach.

Simply dubbed Fried Lobster, twin lobster tails lightly dipped in a tempura batter, are served with drawn butter, spicy remoulade and a crab fried rice timbale. Somebody should add the phrase, "the most succulent you'll ever eat," to the description of this dramatically presented dish.

Brief lovers opt for T's Cowboy Ribeye topped with lemon butter and garlic lump crabmeat. "T's" stands for Taylor's and represents his native Houston roots.

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Sweet Georgia Brown features jazz and fine dining with dishes such as Chef Jerry's Signature Crab and Shrimp Cakes, Escargot and Jordan Cabernet Sauvignon from 1998.

Taylor maintained that the wine list was "a work in process." Since lists Taylor "tailored" at The Parkway Grille won Wine Spectator awards, it's only reasonable to assume that he'll reach for similar wine accolades for Sweet Georgia Brown in the near future.

Executive Pastry Chef Nicholas Colandino, who practiced his craft at Pike Street restaurant in Pontiac under the former ownership, creates desserts to satisfy any sweet tooth. Chef Nick's Amaretto Cheese Tortie accompanied by white and dark chocolate tiles is his signature. Sweet Georgia Brown's dessert signatures are Georgia Peach Cobbler and Big Mama's Chocolate Cake.

Eleanor Heald is a Troy resident who writes about dining, food, wine and spirits for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. To leave her a voice mail message, dial (734) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, mailbox 1864H.

## SWEET GEORGIA BROWN

Where: 1045 Brush St.  
(at Monroe), Detroit.  
(313) 965-1245.

Open: Monday-Thursday,  
11 a.m. to 11 p.m., Friday until  
1 a.m., Saturday 4 p.m. to 1 a.m.  
Sunday Jazz Champagne  
Brunch 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.,  
dinner 6-10 p.m.

Food style: Classic American  
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Cost: A la carte menu  
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