



Bread & Butterfly's interior is reminiscent of a Parisian bistro.

C'est Si Bon!

Seasonal ingredients and on-point execution define dining at Billy Allin's Bread & Butterfly

BY KATE PARHAM KORDSMEIER | PHOTO: SARA HANNA

As I sit down at a marble table in the brightly lit sunroom, slowly perusing the short menu at Bread & Butterfly, avocado toast catches my eye. I know it's elemental, but I also know I must have it.

Even as I'm telling the server—who appears either not to speak English or not be interested in talking to me (I prefer to think it's the former)—that I'd like the avocado toast for breakfast, I'm wondering why I'd waste a restaurant meal on something I could so easily make at home myself.

Most people with rudimentary cooking skills can master the ubiquitous avocado toast—just look to Instagram for proof of its mass appeal. Yet here I am, seated in the all-day French café created by one of Atlanta's most celebrated chefs, paying \$8 for a breakfast I make myself at least three times a week.

I throw in a "side order" of scrambled eggs with smoked trout on brioche to convince myself I'm not that basic.

Then, one bite into the avocado toast, I immediately realize I could never recreate the perfection that chef and owner Billy Allin crafts into each and every one of his dishes. (For the uninitiated, B&B is the third offspring of Allin, of Decatur's Cakes & Ale fame.)

The bread is a meticulously-toasted sourdough; the slightest crunchiness exterior gives way to a light center and tastes as if it just came out of the oven. And it likely had: B&B makes all of the bread and pastries in-house and from-scratch daily.

The avocado, so flawlessly ripe and buttery, accented with the slightest twist of a lime and fleckles of chili flakes, peeks out from under a soft-poached egg that nearly oozes its velvety yolk just at the mere idea of picking up my fork. A lightly-dressed salad spiked with razor-thin squash rounds envelops the dish, adding the precise amount of freshness breakfast requires.

I am not awfully, I think as I inhale my "basic breakfast," embarrassed that I ever thought it would be anything less than the best avocado toast I'd ever had. Allin is skilled that way, his food always remarkable in its simplicity. Though I shouldn't give him all the credit, Chef Bryan Stoffelen is the one manning the stove at B&B. He's also the one I can thank for the fluffiest soft-scrambled eggs I've tasted, so lush and melty I wonder just how long they had to cook (I like to imagine hours to reach this pillow-like state.)

After three more visits to the classic French bistro, I've yet to find one dish I wouldn't order

again without hesitation. They are each edible essays in restraint, minimalism and, perhaps most of all, clarity; each humble ingredient tastes like the superior version of itself.

At lunchtime, it's mandatory to start with the Three Salads, a rotating trio of fresh vegetables in a mustard-heavy vinaigrette. During my visit, it was marinated beets, potatoes and haricots verts. The creamy shrimp remoulade is also excellent, and if you're feeling naughty, the potato and racleite gratin with crispy pork, frisée and sherry vinaigrette will certainly do the trick.

Perhaps nothing is more comforting than the tomato soup, sweet and creamy, with the slightest tang and topped with one of the more impressive puff pastries I've seen. I feel less ashamed of the mess I made around my bowl when our server tells me that no customer has finished this soup without needing a serious "crumbing down" afterward. That's the sign of a good puff pastry. No flakes, no thanks.

The small, warm space, complete with beautiful patterned floors, an intricate copper ceiling, gold leaf signage, natural woods and white marble, is addicting. It's how I get my Paris fix without the transatlantic plane ticket, particularly when I come later in the evening and cozy up into the black leather banquette



Above: The Burger Américain, arguably one of our city's best, is blanketed in melted Swiss and finished with grainy brown mustard.

Top left: Hot and yellow herb-marinated tomatoes pair perfectly with fresh crusty bread.

Left: B&B's chicken liver toast is served with crispy ham and an earthy jam.



Above: A brioche croissant and cup of tea are a lockout, light breakfast or afternoon snack.

Below: Like most everything else on the menu, B&B's desserts stand out for their fresh simplicity.



in the back. (Truth be told, those small café tables are as impractical as they are adorable.)

Order a few carafes of wine for the table to feel truly Euro. There are also 60 bottles to choose from, many of which are affordable and either French or American. Then start with the charcuterie plate, unpretentiously served on a simple dinner plate alongside cornichons and mustard. This meat lover's dream comes with cured ham and terrines that would make Julia Child proud.

Because you need another taste of that brioche, you must order the chicken liver toast. The livers are characteristically pungent, cut with crispy ham and buttery bread and smothered in an herbaceous jus to make everything get along famously. To me, this is France on a plate.

B&B is serving what I deem the best burger in Atlanta right now. The Burger Américain is smothered with melted Swiss cheese, sweet caramelized onions and zesty grain mustard. But in true Allin form, the vegetables are not to be overlooked.

The seasons call the shots, so the menu changes in that regard, but if you go while the squash salad with bulgur is on the menu, do yourself a favor and order two. It's shocking how much flavor is packed in, and it's totally guilt-free after all that bread.

It also epitomizes what B&B is all about: clean, classic cuisine, uncomplicated by modernist techniques and bizarre ingredients that have swayed so many chefs in Atlanta. B&B is not a French-inspired bistro that serves some strange amalgamation of Parisian food. Rather, its menu is timeless, serving all the

iconic French dishes you'd expect. I'm particularly captivated by the pastry display at the coffee-during-the-day, wine-at-night bar. Pastry chefs David Garcia and Abigail Quinn turn out buttery croissants that taste so light you can nearly convince yourself they're healthy. One of those, or a sweet brioche or perfect baguette, will ruin all other bread for you.

I could stay here all day, eating a different decadent carb on the hour—and they almost want you to. They're open all day, after all. But if you're thinking of lingering a while at B&B, come prepared to power down. The restaurant has Wi-Fi, but its password is closely guarded by staff. "We made a conscious decision to be conscientious," says Allin of encouraging patrons to put away their smartphones and laptops. "Meaning, everyone needs some time to unplug. It's about taking a break from it all."

On my final visit, I succumb to that notion of leisure and bring a book to read during my breakfast. The turmeric ginger tea is delightful and so healing I pretend I deserve a chocolate croissant after being so good. It is worth every calorie. ■

BREAD & BUTTERFLY

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Recommended: Three Salads (\$8), Burger Américain (\$15), Chicken Liver Toast (\$15)

Bottom line: Billy Allin's Bread & Butterfly dishes up classic French cuisine in the all-day café, where the food is, in true Allin fashion, remarkable in its simplicity.