



CS

CHICAGO SOCIAL | MODERN LUXURY™

DECADENCE!

All That Dazzle! Baubles Go Bold

Our Over-the-Top Gift Guide

Divine Gourmet Getaways

Realty World: Penthouse, Anyone?

+PLUS

THE SEXY SIX! MEET
CHICAGO'S PR PRINCESSES

TED ALLEN IS ONE BUSY DUDE

LYRIC'S LATEST HERO

AND ALL THE BEST PARTIES



NOVEMBER 2007 \$5.95

FOOD DRINK DEAL

BY LIZ GROSSMAN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANTHONY TAHLER

HELLO OTOM

Moto's new sister restaurant experiments with contemporary comfort food

"It's a reflection of Moto," chef Daryl Nash says of Otom, the Fulton Market District restaurant where he's been creating upscale comfort food since it opened this summer. Maybe that explains why I walked right into Moto while looking for its sister restaurant, Otom (pronounced "autumn"). After all, they are right next to each other and, from the outside, look almost identical. But when it comes to food, Otom's fare is far from Moto's lasers and liquid nitrogen. Nash, who was Moto's sous chef for three years before moving next door, calls it "a full menu flip" and a complement to the science lab-inspired dégustation. "Otom is more approachable, more comfortable," says Adriana Carrasco, who owns both restaurants with husband Joseph De Vito. "You can just walk right in."

And once you find the place, you can certainly walk in and feel right at home, as the vibe is low-key, with nary a prix fixe in sight. That doesn't mean you should show up looking like a schlub: Otom still has that see-and-be-seen scene a Fulton Market restaurant simply can't escape, with the prerequisite hip decor. A multi-striped floor-to-ceiling curtain backs the rear dining area. The Miami-inspired dining room features white tables topped with vases that sprout a single daisy and plastic Tang-orange chairs that pop in the otherwise sparse space. A high-top communal dining table in the lounge area looks more like an art installation than a seating area, but it comfortably accommodates up to 14 guests who want to be in the center of the action.

Instead of the edible menus and polymer boxes found at Moto, Otom's equally attentive servers deliver hearty, contemporary comfort food offered at a far lower price point. You may be tempted to overlook a ubiquitous menu item like Trio of Miniature Burgers (\$12), but Nash's tasty trifecta toppings includes bacon and cheddar, mushroom and Swiss and a fried quail egg, with an addictive stack of shoestring potatoes and homemade ketchup and mustard on the side. We also loved the Chinook Salmon Ceviche (\$14), three large wonton crisps piled high with thick chunks of marinated salmon, creamy coconut milk and a garlic chili paste. Entrées include hearty goodness like mac and cheese, pot pies and braised dishes that are more

haute than home-style when it comes to presentation and portion-size. The Macaroni and Cheese (\$14), made with rosemary white cheddar and topped with a Parmesan-panko crumble, is served in a small cast-iron pot that fits inside a rectangular wooden tray. The cold weather-perfect dish of Short Rib Ravioli (\$19) features melt-in-your-mouth meat and sage goat cheese stuffed into three homemade ravioli topped with a candied sweet potato and brown butter purée. Vegetarians aren't totally left in the dust, with items like Roasted Acorn Squash with oyster mushrooms and surprisingly tasty seared tofu topped with Moto-inspired freeze-dried English peas (\$16).

While starters and entrées shine, we were disappointed with dessert. Otom's anti-climactic, deconstructed Banana Split (\$9) left us longing for the old-fashioned original. Luckily, the sweet cocktails made up for it, with selections like the Oh's Geisha (\$12), a sugary-tart concoction of Midori, Aperol, yuzu and a candy violet rim, and the Autumn Spice (\$12), a purée of sweet potato butter, soju, pumpkin spice, and half and half garnished with a candy pumpkin. The creamy, comforting drink reminded us of, well, autumn. ■

Otom, 951 W. Fulton Market St., 312.491.5804. Mon.-Thurs., 5PM to 11PM, Fri. 5PM to 1AM, Sat. 5PM to 2AM.



Left: The beef short rib ravioli with shallot and sage goat cheese, candied sweet potato and brown butter. Below: A community table sits in the front lounge area.

