

## **Sensational sandwiches**

**Gourmet-to-go moves outside the perimeter offering a wow factor that makes patrons momentarily forget they are in the suburbs.**

By JOY JOHNSTON

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Muss & Turner's, the buzz-generating gourmet deli and market, is a knockout.

Its location in the One Ivy Walk mixed-use development on the Vinings-Smyrna border screams cutesy suburban overkill. Just exactly what are all of those balconies about? But Muss & Turner's is refreshingly simple without sacrificing style and quality.

The restaurant's creators are Chef Todd Mussman, formerly of Fifth Group Restaurant Sala, and Ryan Turner, who previously served as Food and Beverage Manager at East Lake Golf Club. Both are definitely hands-on owners, eager to receive feedback by making an honest, sincere effort to chat with customers. The owners say they want "to share our passion for great food, drink, and people."

One side of the large, open space is dominated by a specialty food and wine shop. The other half is a high-end delicatessen. The open-air kitchen is a nice feature, though it can get a bit smoky.

The retail food selection would certainly interest any self-respecting gourmand, but beware of high prices. Wine is divided into three price levels, and the selection is commendable. Mussman provides a personal tour of his favorite choices that is informative and entertaining.

At the other end of the store, servers hand hungry customers menus and take orders. Then patrons present a copy of the order at the checkout counter, where innovative colander lights hang. They pay and receive a handwritten sign with their name.

Orders are brought to the tables — that is, if one can snag a seat, which is not an easy feat during the lunch hour rush.

Sandwiches have whimsical names that could border on annoying, but they are so tasty that it's easily forgivable. The Tuscan Raider (\$8.99) is a juicy, wood-grilled chicken breast topped with prosciutto, fresh herbs, mozzarella and a unique

roasted garlic crème fraiche, all on a delectable rosemary foccacia roll.

A sandwich costing that much might raise some eyebrows, but it is worth every cent for the quality of ingredients and the careful consideration given flavor and texture. Each sandwich comes with a choice of pickle.

Todd's Token Salad (\$4.50) is a hearty mix of coarsely shredded field greens topped with large cubes of roasted beets, toasted hazelnuts and a generous dollop of goat cheese with a shallot balsamic vinaigrette.

Add some of that tasty wood-grilled chicken for an extra \$2. The smokiness of the poultry goes well with the creamy goat cheese, the sweet, earthy beets and the tangy dressing.

Vacuum-sealed entrees are a unique spin on meals to go. Simply place the bags of meats, seafood and vegetables in a simmering pot of water for the specified time on the package, and voila, a gourmet meal in just minutes.

The results are as close to restaurant quality as one can get at home. A braised leg of lamb (\$15.99) is moist and flavorful, falling off the bone and redolent with thyme.

The grilled pork medallions (\$9.99) are juicy and tender. A side order of collard greens are cooked to tender perfection, seasoned with just the right amount of a peppery kick, and finish with a hint of sweetness that makes them noteworthy.

Daily specials are as in demand as tables, with only one left at 1 p.m. on a Saturday.

Signature desserts change frequently as well. A cornmeal cake, layered with crème and ringed by coconut and sugar-crusted raspberries (\$6.99) is a heavenly way to finish a meal.

Skeptical intown residents that make the short OTP trek should come back wishing Muss Turner's was in their own neighborhood. Finally, Smyrna has something to be proud of other than being the birthplace of Hollywood starlet Julia Roberts.