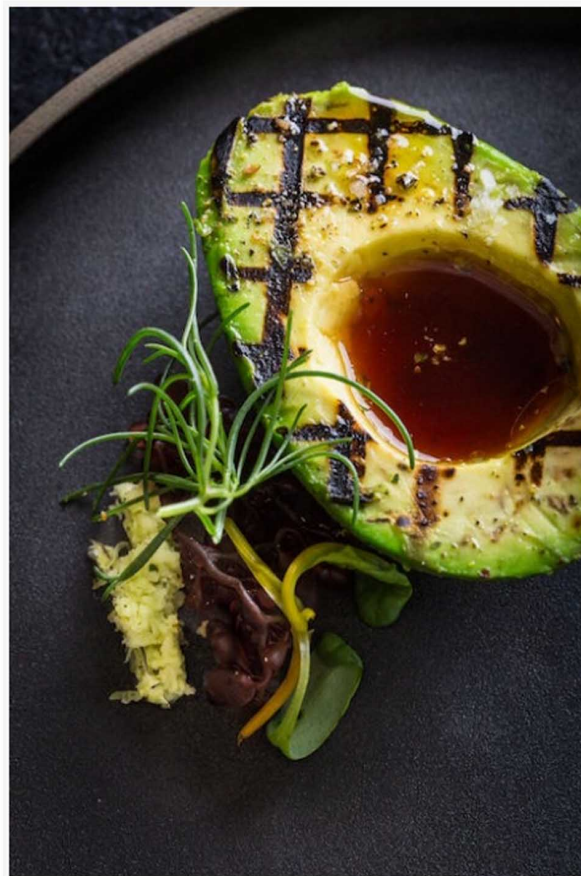


HAUTE LIVING

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4 Reasons to Pursue a Reservation at Bird Dog Palo Alto



Bird Dog Palo Alto's Grilled Avocado

Palo Alto's reputation as the innovation capital of the world has not necessarily extended to culinary breakthroughs, until now. With the opening of Bird Dog at 420 Ramona Street, chef/owner **Robbie Wilson** and his wife **Emily Perry Wilson** are raising the bar on the local dining scene, offering 'big city' eats on par with gourmet offerings found at the Bay Area's best restaurants. In this unassuming, yet cutting edge town, best known for cerebral energy and scholarly dreams, Bird Dog – and Chef Wilson – are revelations.

Wilson named his restaurant after a determined creature whose most distinguishing trait is dogged pursuit, a quality Wilson emulates with his own resolute pursuit of comestible excellence. A veteran of Maison Trosigros, The French Laundry, Nobu, and most recently Mattei's Tavern in Los Olivos, Wilson offers just the right amount of ingenuity and intensity at his new spot. Here are a few reasons why, after being open only two months, Bird Dog is the Palo Alto place to be:

Hang with the cool kids

Looking more like a much younger and exceedingly healthier Keith Richards than the culinary rock star that he is, Chef Wilson commands the kitchen and the dining room with charisma that is palpable. His ultra cool presence elevates the already ultra cool atmosphere. The same can be said of sommelier (soon-to-be Master Sommelier) **Brent Jones**, who roams the dining room with an appealing, self-effacing modesty that belies his wine expertise. Add to the haute mix Bird Dog investors **Chamath Palihapitiya** and **Brigette Lau**, the venture capitalist power couple who are often spotted at the restaurant. (Try to sneak a peek at Palihapitiya's ring finger on which he might be sporting his **Golden State Warriors championship ring**. He's a partial owner of the world champs.)

Haute vibe

Designed by **Jamie Bush**, the 120-seat California modern interior is chic and comfortable and features deep blue mohair banquettes, ebonized oak chars and brass-based tables with butcher block. A herringbone pattern of blue cork adorns the floor, and hand blown glass lights illuminate with a soft glow. Wilson first planned to blanket the interior in wood, but after discovering a perfect condition cinder block wall during the remodel, he retained it, painted it white and added custom-carved and graffitied decoy ducks to punctuate the space. A curated playlist of eclectic artists (Culture Club, Rod Stewart, Drake) provides enough variety to appeal to the diverse crowd that streams through the door – from Stanford professors, to hoodie-wearing tech titans, to young families. Bonus: use the 'facilities,' and you may exit with a tip or two from Julia Child; audio from her television show 'The French Chef' is piped-in to the restrooms.

Really good grub

Wilson is now working in a town where originality and creativity are paramount to success. He admits that he cooks what he likes to eat, and fittingly, he likes to push the envelope just a bit. His menu of crazy fresh seasonal ingredients is divided into three sections: Raw items, proteins (meats), and vegetables/grains. All portions are fairly small, and are meant to be shared. Variety is key in a Bird Dog meal. Start with Big-eye Tuna with Honeycrisp apple, aged soy and lime. Then enjoy the Grilled Persimmon salad with burrata, pomegranate, and vinegar from 'Cuties.' From the protein portion, choose from Wagyu Ribeye, Wagyu Striploin, Salmon, Fried Chicken Thigh or Pork Belly. Vegetable choices include Spinach, Potato Terrine, Heirloom Carrot, Eggplant, or Farro. Three dessert choices include: Cookie Jar (a selection of five small peppermint macaroons and smoked chocolate madeleines served in a large glass cookie jar), Chocolate Cremeux, or Lime Curd Tart. All dishes are artfully served on the warmly hospitable canvas of either Japanese ceramics or Sausalito-based Heath handmade pottery.

The Grilled Avocado

Sure, this item should be featured under 'good grub' above but it deserves its own talking point and is alone worth a visit to Bird Dog. Listed under the 'raw' portion of the menu, this simplest of food products is elevated to high culinary art in Wilson's kitchen: one perfect avocado, peeled, sliced in half, and warmed on the grill. Warm ponzu fills the pit, and wasabi is served on the side. So uncomplicated and so good. Wilson has many times witnessed diners devouring multiple orders of the dish. Enjoy a perfect Sauvignon Blanc, selected by Jones, with this dish.

