

## Savoy BY BRIAN ADORNETTO, Food Editor



Savoy's white linen draped tables are meticulously set, but don't let that fool you; this restaurant is without airs. The rest of the décor is neat and simple, and the service is not only natural and graceful, but the down-to-earth staff makes everyone feel like family.

The kitchen is run by Executive Chef Peter Gibson, who has been cooking since he was 15 years old with people like Jean Claude, Heath Holloman, and Paul Fontaine to name just a few. Peter spent years traveling, fishing and cooking his way from New Jersey to Alaska and from St. Croix thankfully to Raleigh.

When asked to explain his cooking philosophy and style, he says, "Clean, simple flavors that are texturally diverse, not only within a dish but also across courses. I make classic dishes honestly and from the heart. I just want to make my mentors proud." That, he does. After eating at Savoy, you'll quickly agree that Chef Gibson is one of the best chefs in Raleigh you've never heard of.

Gibson and owner Jeff Snell champion Triangle businesses and merchants in all aspects of the restaurant, which is located in the former Fins north Raleigh space. Chef Gibson raises the quail that provide the restaurant's quail eggs and he also grows some of the vegetables offered on the menu. As much as possible of what they don't grow is sourced locally.

Savoy's current First Courses include a Mushroom Tart (\$5), Foie Gras (\$14) and Veal Sweet Breads (\$8). For the tart, a rich and creamy mushroom ragout sits on top of a golden puff pastry disc. At a mere five bucks, I felt like a foodie thief eating this terrific starter. The Peralada Cava Brut Reserva (\$9/glass) with its sweet effervescence properly complemented the sherry-infused mushrooms. The Foie Gras (duck

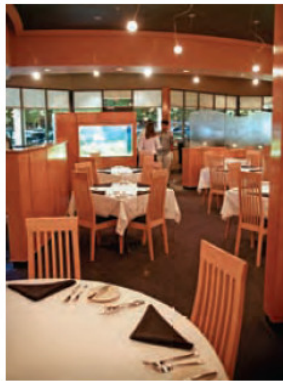
liver) was fabulous. Served atop a Roquefort crostini and sauced with a blackberry cardamom chutney, it was sweet, salty, buttery, and crunchy. Veal Sweet Breads (thymus gland) are a rare delicacy not usually found in the Triangle and these were amazing, a bona fide pleasure to find, and enjoy. The crispy breading led the way to a creamy center and the tomato fondue added a touch of sweetness. While Sauternes is a traditional pairing for foie gras, the honeyed notes of the Chateau D'Armajan (\$9/glass) also made a great match for the sweet breads.



The Second Course section of the menu consisted of soups and salads. The Spinach Salad (\$7) was well dressed with a homemade sun dried tomato vinaigrette. Its herbaceous, tangy fried goat cheese played nicely off the intense flavors of the oven-dried tomatoes. The hearty Roasted Pumpkin Bisque (\$7) was smoky and filled with the delightful taste of fall.

Pan Roasted Maple Leaf Farms Duck (\$24) and Beef Tenderloin (\$26) are two of the seven entrees (Third Course) offered at Savoy. The irresistible sweet potato and shallot hash harmonized tastefully with the expertly cooked duck. The crispy kale was fried and salted like a potato chip and was every bit as addictive. The expertly seared tenderloin and the perfectly textured truffle mash were heavenly; this classic dish was executed with deft precision. The Leveroni Pinot Noir from Sonoma, (\$12), a full bodied, velvety wine with its juicy berry-ness, was a fabulous choice to round out the course and enhanced the flavors of both entrees.

Two of the most popular dessert choices



are the Crème Brulee (\$6) and Rum Raisin Tart (\$6). Made in a deep dish, the Crème Brulee's top was uniformly caramelized and crunchy while beneath was the traditional vanilla bean studded custard. The tart, served with a delicious apple and anise compote, was more like an individual open-faced pie. It wasn't overly sweet and had just the right amount of spice. It was paired with the soft, silky Burmester 10 Year Tawny Port for a very delicious end to a great meal.

Savoy is elegant but unpretentious and the menu is upscale and sustainable, but approachable and reasonable. It not only enhances special occasions but can affordably serve as a frequent date night destination. This balance between formal and approachable is what makes it the best kept secret in North Raleigh. 🍷



Brian is a culinary instructor, food writer and personal chef. His business, Love at First Bite, specializes in private cooking classes and intimate dinners. For more information, please visit Brian at [www.loveatfirstbite.net](http://www.loveatfirstbite.net). Brian can be reached at [brian@raleighdowntowner.com](mailto:brian@raleighdowntowner.com).

**Savoy**  
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Lunch 11:30am-2:00pm Tuesday-Friday  
Dinner 5:00-10:00pm Tuesday-Thursday  
5:00-11:00pm Friday & Saturday  
Cuisine: Classic American with European techniques  
Meals: Lunch and dinner  
Ambiance: Romantic casual elegance  
Service: Professional and personable  
Dress: Casual but neat  
Noise Level: Low  
Features: Vegetarian and low-carb options, gluten-free upon request; outdoor seating, specials, bar dining, credit cards accepted  
Wine List: Diverse and upscale with plenty of good by-the-glass choices  
Alcohol: Full bar  
Recommended Dishes: Veal Sweetbreads, Mushroom Tart, Roasted Pumpkin Bisque, Pan Roasted Duck, Rum Raisin Tart  
Wi-Fi Enabled: Yes  
Parking: Large parking lot  
Reservations: Accepted and recommended on weekends  
Downtowner Tips: The Six Course Tasting Menu is an absolute steal at \$49 per person