



FRIED CHICKEN BISCUIT,
BREAD & BUTTER ONIONS,
WHITE BARBECUE, FRIED EGG,
PIMENTO CHEESE



COCOA SPICE RUBBED DUCK,
CREAMED TURNIP, BRAISED
FERMENTED CABBAGE,
SUNCHOKES

PHOTOS BY TRASK BEDORTHA

EMOTIONALLY FATTENING

Beating the winter blues at **Party Downtown** BY WILL KENNEDY

Winter descends on the Willamette Valley like a moldy blanket. Even though I grew up around here, this weather can bring me down. The evening of Nov. 8 was prematurely dark and drizzly. It was also the one-year anniversary of Donald Trump's inauguration — which didn't help the mood. So my wife and I decided to hit Party Downtown for comforting food and a culinary pick-me-up. We wanted to know if a nice quiet meal and some conversation could cure the winter blues.

Not only did we find a delicious meal, we were surprised by a big announcement: starting in February 2018, the team behind Party Downtown will take over the deli at Friendly Street Market. "It's a perfect story in a way," Party chef and co-owner Tiffany Norton told us. Norton and her business partner and husband Mark Kosmicki launched their Party venture with Party Cart, a Friendly neighborhood staple for many years.

But more on that later. First, my wife and I wanted to eat.

Party's décor mixes a sort of southwestern feel with a touch of Icelandic brutalism. It's minimal but warm and inviting, and the service is always great.

For starters, my wife and I ordered the summery house-made smoked Anaheim queso sauce served with sweet potato chips, charred carrot escabeche and radish. Cold at first, the pickled veg was a bit of a surprise, but the bitter flavor mixed with the heat of the queso sauce ended up inspiring.

A wintery choice was made when we decided to split the delicious and complex smoked beet salad with blue cheese yogurt, pickled blueberry, arugula and shoestring beet.

As far as seasonal cooking is concerned, Norton told us she finds something to cherish in every season. She says to expect Party's frequently changing menu to get a little

Seeking a little bit of summer, I decided on the fried chicken with white barbecue sauce, a biscuit with melt-in-your-mouth bacon honey butter and southern greens with pepper vinegar.

My wife ordered the house-made smoked mushroom veggie burger, lettuce, butter pickled onion and white barbecue sauce on house-made brioche bun. She added pimento cheese. For a side dish, she chose the scandalously smooth turnip/parsnip puree.

Norton moved to Eugene from the warm and sunny South and struggled with the weather at first.

"I just stay busy," she explains. "As most people do when they move here, I had seasonal affective disorder for the first year. In a lot of places, you're like, 'Oh it's rainy today. I'm not going to go do anything. I'm just going to watch a movie.' You obviously can't do that here. You have to keep going. That's how I deal with it: stay busy. Now I love the winter."

My wife and I left Party warm, full and satisfied. With a new Party location opening just in time for spring serving breakfast, lunch and dinner specials —

what Norton calls "a slightly Southern twist" — there's a lot to look forward to. So, I'll pass the dark part of the year dreaming of eating Party's delicious food in Friendly Street Market's ample outdoor seating. Norton says she expects to be busy "any day that it's nice out." ■

Party Downtown is open from 5 pm to 9 pm Tuesday to Thursday, 5 pm to 10 pm Friday and Saturday, and 5 pm to 9 pm Sundays at 64 West 8th Alley. The new Party opens at 2757 Friendly Street. See PartyEugene.com.

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richer, "a little more decadent," as we move into the dark part of the year.

"I love every season at the beginning," she continues. "I get excited about the changes. By the end of it, I'm like 'Ok, I'm ready for the next one.' Summer is wild. There's a million choices. It's almost stressful. Winter is like, 'Ok, here are the ingredients we can get, so let's go for it.'"

Norton says Oregon truffles are some of her favorite things to cook with during this time of year.