

## The farm-to-table movement comes to La Mesa

Farmer's Table in La Mesa Village brings some upscale  
flavor to East County



*Bucatini*

CityBeat showcased La Mesa in its monthly [Neighborhood Watch feature back in October](#) and, since then, other local pubs have followed this one's lead by declaring La Mesa cool. Business owners have done their part by opening up on-trend businesses such as pot dispensaries and noodle shops to help push the progressive needle.

Still, as nice as it is to live in La Mesa, it has lacked a true reason for foodies to visit—until now.

A few months ago, [Farmer's Table](#) (8141 La Mesa Blvd.) opened up in the La Mesa Village in what was formerly the location of Sanfilippo's Pizza, the type of Italian restaurant you go to before high school football games.

Farmer's Table is more upscale: This Italian eatery is designed to look like rooms of an affluent home, even including books on the wall. The end result is forcing locals to do something they haven't had to do in other nearby restaurants: Make reservations.

Diners who live to eat will probably enjoy Farmer's Table for the most part. Those looking for something more elaborate may think "WTF?" That's because the menu consists of simply prepared items using high-quality ingredients. The vegetables aren't drowned in sauces because the chef doesn't have to hide anything.

Take the burnt carrot salad: The carrots are burned until smoky and then shaved. Sweetness and smokiness is emphasized and enhanced with the help of red onion, avocado, cilantro, feta and a light thyme-citrus vinaigrette. It's one of those dishes that seems so simple and elegant that those who try it will surely be tempted to make it at home.

The bison tartare is another winning starter: Raw bison meat chopped up with avocado, garlic, capers, a quail egg and mango-pomegranate salsa that has a nice blend of sweet and savory. There is also lots to like with the pear ricotta bruschetta: The fruit is at its peak and plays well with the softness of the ricotta and the crispness of the artisan wood-fired bread. However, the addition of honey makes it a little too sweet for a starter (but an excellent dessert). I think a drizzle of balsamic vinegar might work better than the honey.

I have to give props to my server. I was torn between the black and white tagliolini, a seafood pasta dish served bouillabaisse-style, and the pappardelle, which is served with a sauce made from oxtail and porcini mushrooms. The seafood pasta was \$10 more than the pappardelle, and the guy could have easily upsold me. He didn't. He passionately promoted the \$18 pappardelle—which was as close to an authentic Italian-style bolognese sauce I've seen here.

The short rib with polenta and braised greens was also a delightful entrée. The meat fell off the bone and had the perfect slow-roasted tang, while the greens added a touch of bitterness that came to life in the meat drippings.

Not everything was perfect. My wife got the vegetarian pasta dish, which had bucatini, broccoli, roasted tomatoes and dried ricotta cheese. She thought it was just OK, but she wasn't raving like I was about my dishes.

She did, however, like the wine prices. There were some expensive bottles of wine, but the \$24 Malbec went well with our meals and seemed like a bargain since we got four glasses of wine for the price of two cocktails.

Farmer's Table is the type of place that a lot of La Mesans hoped would eventually come to the city. Now that it's there, they do seem to be enjoying it and, for the most part, I certainly did.