

FIRST BITE

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Details star at tasty, sleek Mez

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The Food: Figuring out the menu at Mez will be child's play compared to finding the dining room. It's a complex place, the EpiCentre, and the layout of the movie theater/restaurant is a challenge the first time. But once you've got the hang of it, details will delight, from pepper mills on each table to trailers running outside each theater (into which you can take food and drink: yes, even your steak). The menu's diverse, from a miso/sake-marinated black cod (delicious, moist, sweet) to pan-roasted pork tenderloin with Granny Smith apples (tender, generous, sweet) to the opulent palacinka, a Czech crepe with macerated berries and blueberry cheesecake ice cream (delicate, vibrant, sweet). Pizzas, burgers, pasta, cedar-grilled salmon, roasted organic beet salad: Chef Klime Kovaceski has a little of everything on here. Presentation is handsome and portions are remarkable.

The Look: Contemporary and dramatic, with black walls, black tables that show the wood's grain, and light fixtures that involve lots of sparkly crystals, this also relies on the variety of the space for drama. From the lower-level dining room, you can see the foyer's chandelier over a partial wall to the kitchen, as well as the concession stand's chalkboard menu.

The servers: Genial and happy to give tours, ours recommended a few dishes but did lean hard on the old "everything's fabulous."

Quirks of note: If you order a meal at the concession stand, you get a pager so that you can go into your movie and be summoned when your food is ready. I'm hoping people come early enough to only be jumping up mid-preview, not mid-movie. ... The popcorn has a room of its own, so the smell doesn't overwhelm the rest of the place.

Details: 210 E. Trade St., 704-971-2400. Lunch and dinner daily, entrees \$6-\$28.



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