

## OPENINGS

## 8 Things to Know About MIDA

BY SCOTT KEARNAN | NOVEMBER 29, 2016



Its Italian name is a reference to "generosity." Today, MIDA, one of our most anticipated restaurants of the year, has opened its doors on the edge of the South End — and chef-owner Douglass Williams is happy to have the chance to share his hospitality with the neighborhood. "I want to bring people together," says Williams. "Italian is a universally loved cuisine, and I want to push the boundaries of it and use it as a platform to share my techniques, my travels and my inspiration." Curious what he has in store? Here are a few things to know about this hot new opening.

782 Tremont St.; 617-936-3490

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### This young chef honed his skills around the world.

At only 32, Williams has logged a lot of experience all over the globe. He was born and raised in Atlantic City, and cut his teeth working at casino restaurants after culinary school. Then he gambled on a move to Boston and spent over two years at Radius, Michael Schlow's late, great fine-dining institution. Soon, though, more exotic locales came calling. First came travels to Bangkok and Southeast Asia, where he worked at a resort in the Thai province of Chumphon. He delved into pasta-making with a stint in Sardinia. Then he accepted a chef de partie role at Paul

Liebrandt's now-shuttered Corton in NYC, then moved to Paris to join the team at the acclaimed Akrame. And in 2008, Williams launched his own private chef business, Culinary Breakdowns, which charges flat rates for cooking classes and customized tasting menus prepared in clients' homes. He says it allowed him to build Boston-area buzz — and ancillary income — while preparing to open his own restaurant.



Credit: Courtesy of Jose Luis Martinez/MIDA

#### **It's aiming for Alphabet City style.**

The intimate restaurant (seating 70, with 25 more on the patio) inhabits a corner spot on the South End-Roxbury border, bridging two independently diverse neighborhoods. Williams is after an urban-crossroads vibe in the atmosphere of the space, which boasts huge walls of windows to draw passersby — and provide excellent people-watching for guests inside. "I wanted the feeling you get when you go to the East Village or Alphabet City," said Williams. "Those restaurants have an energy about them, a glow, a sense of noir. They sit right on the street, not set back, and provide a wonderful contrast to the city outside." The space, which formerly housed Estelle's Southern Cuisine and the short-lived chicken joint Cluckit!, was entirely renovated by Sousa Design, the team behind local spots like Alden & Harlow and Select Oyster Bar. Now it features farm tables, gray banquettes and cream leather-backed bar stools by the open kitchen, with European-style spindle chandeliers casting a romantic radiance.

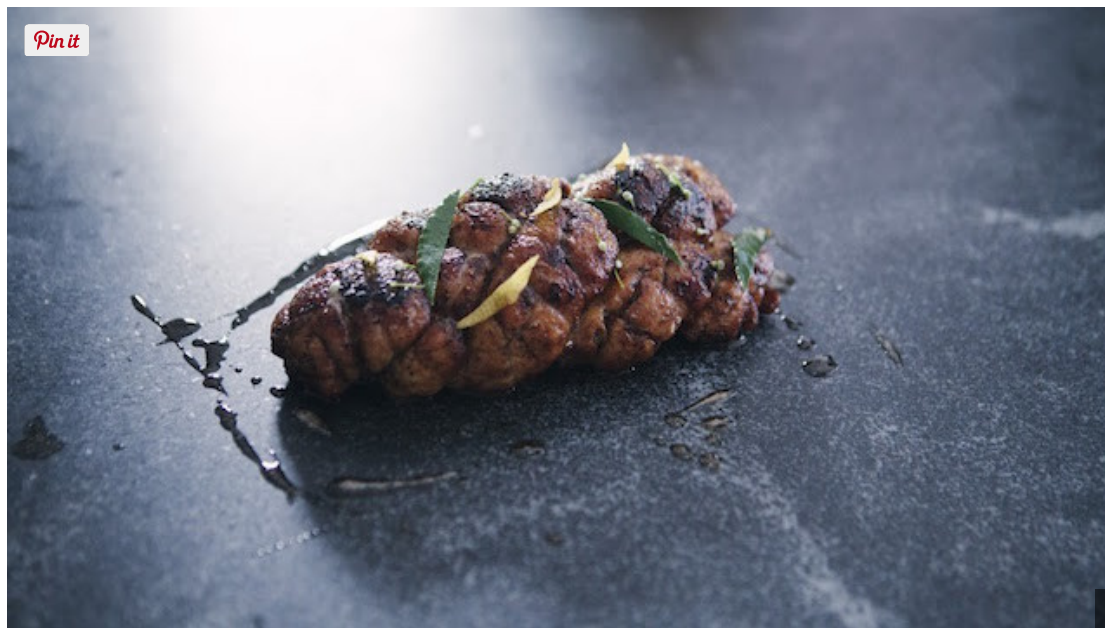


Credit: Courtesy of Jose Luis Martinez/MIDA

#### **The handmade pastas are standout.**

"Italian might be the most recognizable food in the world," said Williams of his inspiration for MIDA. "If you take anyone of any descent, and you sit them down in front of a bowl of pasta, it's a soul-warming, humane, nutritious and approachable experience." His last South End gig also

involved noodles; back in 2010, he joined the opening team of Ken Oringer's and Jamie Bissonnette's Coppa as a pasta cook. Among MIDA's plates is a seasonal ricotta gnocchi, which is currently served with white winter kale and crème fraîche cardamom.



Credit: Courtesy of Jose Luis Martinez/MIDA

### **It's not beholden to any one region.**

Though some chefs might opt to stick to a particular region or emphasize a specific element of Italian cookery, Williams sees his personality, technique and seasonal approach to be the common thread that links the dishes. Get to know Williams through plates like the doppio ravioli with crosne (or knotroot), brown butter and roasted sweetbread (pictured here).



Credit: Courtesy of Jose Luis Martinez/MIDA

### **There are family-style dishes...**

Because this is an Italian restaurant, after all. On the "condividi con famiglia" section of the menu, you'll find shareable large-format plates like the grilled sirloin cap (pictured), with radicchio, balsamic, Italian chimichurri and lobster mushroom, plus one of Williams' personal favorites: whole roasted parsnip and octopus with gremolata, white romesco and horseradish.



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**... and plenty of "piccoli" plates.**

One section of the menu is devoted to small ("piccoli") plates like fluke crudo with lime juice, lime leaf and coconut.



**Get ready for grilled oysters.**

They're one of Williams' favorite ways to enjoy shellfish well through the winter. He plans to mix up the accompaniments for the Cape-harvested oysters; right now they're served with a kale-citron mignonette.



Credit: Courtesy of Jose Luis Martinez/MIDA

### **There's going to be a neighborhood bar scene.**

The 12-seat blue bar offers a pop of color in the space, and a bit of edge with its back-lit metal mesh front. It's a perfectly cozy space for neighbors to stop in for a sip from general manager Seth Gerber's selection, which focuses on Northern Italian and French wines, 10 varieties of vermouth, Italian and New England craft beers and creative cocktails like the Cinque Terre, a mix of bourbon, pistachio orgeat, amaro montenegro and lemon juice.

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