James Beard Winner Andrea Reusing Dishes on The Durham

ANDREA REUSING BRINGS MORE THAN HER SIGNATURE SPIN ON DISHES TO THE DURHAM HOTEL—SHE’S BUILT AN ENTIRE COMMUNITY FOR GUESTS AND LOCALS ALIKE.

By Laura D’ Alessandro | October 2018 | Chef Profiles

Andrea Reusing
The Durham | The Durham Hotel
Durham, North Carolina
Opened October 2015

Who made the first move? My partner Craig Spitzer texted a photo of the building to me. It has always been one of my favorites in Durham, and I knew right away that I wanted to learn more about the project.

What was attractive about the idea of a hotel restaurant? I love the 24-hour feeling that only hotels have, and I was interested in the challenge of matching that all-day, all-night vibe with different restaurant outlets in all the same building.

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How did the Durham’s creation differ from your other concepts? The Durham is the first multiple-outlet concept I have worked on, and our priority was to both create a space for locals and hotel guests alike. That means our restaurant space is open all day as a coffee shop hosting mending workshops, listening lunches, pop-up museums, and more linking local artists and organizations with the community, transitioning to a full-service dinner atmosphere at night. The energy is always high, and there’s always a lot going on—business travelers host events in our private event spaces; book clubs meet on the patio; and visitors and locals mingle together on the roof with drinks, North Carolina seafood, and live music, DJs, and evolving playlists from my husband, Merge records cofounder Mac McLaughin.

In downtown Durham, we are in the middle of a tight-knit community, says Chef Andrea Reusing.

How do you tailor it for hotel guests? One of our main goals was to help lay the groundwork for a real North Carolina experience for our hotel guests. That means sourcing locally as much as possible—we use Durham-based Counter Culture Coffee in the coffee shop and deliver freshly ground coffee to rooms on demand. Our continental breakfast is made daily with wholesome ingredients like milk from Homeland Creamery in Julian, North Carolina, in our homemade butter and yogurt. We bake Anson Mills cornmeal and preserved local strawberries from L&F Farm in Durham into corn muffins, roast Raleigh’s Boulevard Bread country loaf for cheese toast, and bake candied ginger scones with freshly milled wheat from Carolina Ground in Asheville. Snacks in the rooms are all made in North Carolina from companies like Durham’s Big Spoon Roasters, Asheviller’s Poppy’s Handcrafted Popcorn, Winston-Salem’s Drink the Sunshine, and Blister-Fried Peanuts from Mount Olive First United Methodist Church.

In the restaurant and on the roof, that also means sourcing from as many nearby farmers, ranchers, brewers, fisheries, and distilleries as possible.

In downtown Durham, we are in the middle of a tight-knit community of food businesses, shops, music venues, breweries, and bookstores, and when we have guests who are new to the city, our focus is introducing them to our friends and neighborhood.

What does your presence do for the hotel brand, and vice versa: how does the hotel anchor you/restauranteur concept? Prior to opening, we made a deliberate decision that we would develop the project as one unified brand and that the dining and drinking would play a guiding role in how guests experience the entire building. The hotel and restaurants really function as one ecosystem.