

Globe takes diners on culinary journeys

By Greg Cox - Correspondent

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Step inside Globe and your eyes are instantly drawn upward to panels suspended from the ceiling, their shapes and silvery glow evocative of low clouds. The curvilinear forms are echoed by the arc of a mahogany-paneled wall with alcoves showcasing pottery and other artifacts from around the world. The scene is so striking, odds are you'll walk right by the globe that's sitting on a round table near the entrance without noticing it. Indeed, the globe --not an artsy mock-up in the dramatic style of the designer decor, but an ordinary globe of the kind found in elementary school rooms -- seems almost out of place.

Once you've dined at Globe, however, it becomes clear that this welcoming emblem is the perfect metaphor for the experience, a gastronomic tour of the world that is executed with the same laser precision as the globe itself. You might even say that ordering from Globe's compact, continent-spanning menu is an adventure akin to spinning a globe, closing your eyes and pointing to a destination at random, and imagining that you're traveling there. Except that the food is real and infinitely more rewarding.

Give the "globe" a spin, and your finger lands on Thai chicken lettuce wraps, an assemble-your-own appetizer featuring hearts of romaine, rice noodles and minced chicken redolent of ginger, mint, chiles and lime. Give it another spin, and you've landed on Mediterranean shores, where glistening cubes of seared tuna are strung out like the day's catch against a backdrop of fennel confit, hummus and lemon caper vinaigrette. Spin again, and you're in Mexico, and the juices are dribbling down your wrist from soft tacos filled with succulent pork, marinated in a complex blend of citrus and spices, and topped with pico de gallo. Again, and your fingertip lands on the border of France and Italy, where flawless leaves of Bibb lettuce are dressed in walnut vinaigrette and garnished with figs, Parma ham and a charming "three-bite grilled brie sandwich."

Entrees continue the globe-trotting adventure, with options ranging from red coconut curry chicken to braised short ribs with creamy Parmesan polenta. You might find yourself lifting the conical lid off a Moroccan meatball tagine and breathing in the heady vapors of its broth before tucking into a mélange of walnuts, raisins, green olives and savory spheres of ground beef and lamb. Cross the Mediterranean, and you'll marvel at the ethereal lightness of the feta gnocchi that accompany expertly grilled lamb chops. Or your itinerary might take you instead to the other side of the globe, where you'll discover echoes of cochinita pibil, a dish with roots in Mayan antiquity, in achiote-marinated pork braised in a banana leaf.

Fittingly, the wine list offers selections from around the world, with particular strengths in California, France and Italy. The 70 or so labels are well-chosen, too, though the eclectic menu had me wishing for a larger by-the-glass offering than the five reds and five whites offered.

Culinary cartographers of this global adventure are the restaurant's owners, executive chef Heath Holloman and sommelier Henry Burgess. Chef de cuisine Gray Modlin has worked in two Michelin-starred restaurants, and for the last seven years at Bistro 607 (which Holloman and Burgess also own). Modlin's experience is evident in food that doesn't aim for strict authenticity but instead captures the essence of cuisines from around the world, translated through the filter of classic culinary training. That the results rarely fail to live up to that ambitious goal isn't surprising, given the lengths to which Holloman and Modlin go in its pursuit. Virtually everything, from the black pepper grissini you're served at the beginning of the meal to the ever-changing assortment of ice creams, sorbets and pastries offered at the end, is made from scratch.

The menu evolves with the seasons, so the braised short ribs I've been craving will probably be gone by the time I get back to Globe for an encore performance. No matter. Whatever course the new menu charts, I'll gladly come along for the ride.

Globe

510-103 Glenwood Ave., Raleigh

836-1811

globeraleigh.com

Cuisine: world

Rating: 4 stars

Prices: \$\$

Atmosphere: casual designer chic

Service: attentive and enthusiastic

Recommended: grilled tuna, Bibb lettuce salad, Moroccan tagine, lamb chops, desserts.

Open: Lunch Monday-Friday, dinner Monday-Saturday.

Reservations: accepted

Other: Visa, MasterCard, American Express; full bar (excellent wine list); smoke free; patio; private dining room available; get a sitter

The N&O's critic dines anonymously; the newspaper pays for all meals. We rank restaurants in five categories:

5 stars - Extraordinary.

4 stars - Excellent.

3 stars - Above average.

2 stars - Average.

1 star - Fair.