

RESTAURANT OPENINGS **Merchants' Overhaul Is Over, and It's Open for Business**

POSTED BY DANA KOPP FRANKLIN ON FRI, JUL 30, 2010 AT 2:25 PM

There's a hip new bistro in town, but it has a long history. It's Merchants, the 22-year-old restaurant in a historic building on Lower Broadway.

The restaurateur brothers Benjamin and Max Goldberg bought Merchants earlier this year, and spent three months on a complete renovation of both the interior and the menu.

The Goldbergs, whose company is called Strategic Hospitality LLC, are known for diverse projects like the chic boite Patterson House and the kitschy, tourist-friendly Paradise Park Trailer Resort.



Bartenders in vintage garb at the snazzy-looking new incarnation of Merchants

Merchants' changed identity is dramatic. The first-floor dining room and bar now have a European bistro look with a black-and-white color scheme that is lighter and more convivial. The ground level is more casual than the upstairs and will serve lunch, dinner and late-night snacks. The bartenders wear snappy bowtie-and-suspenders garb that looks straight out of the 1920s.



Upstairs, the dining room is more elegant and intimate, with a fine-dining menu that aims to attract Nashvillians celebrating special occasions.

The executive chef, Clayton Rollison, is a Culinary Institute of America graduate who has worked at New York's famous Gramercy Tavern. In Nashville, he served as sous chef at the posh Capitol Grille at the Hermitage Hotel.

The downstairs menu has gourmet sandwiches like house-made roast beef with gruyere cheese and horseradish sauce, and confit turkey leg on wheat bread with onion rings (both are \$12). Tater tots are something of a signature item for the Goldbergs. Merchants' tots (\$6) are fried in duck fat, one of the most indulgent and delicious frying oils around.

The fine-dining menu has creative fish dishes, steak and chops, with entrees mostly in the \$19 to \$32 range except for some special-occasion blockbusters like the veal pot roast (\$37) and a Kobe beef strip loin at \$70. It all sounds wonderful, but as always we won't know for sure until it's been open for a little while.

Merchants hopes to cover a lot of bases on Broadway, serving lunch to downtown workers, attracting tourists and locals to the bar scene and providing a white-tablecloth experience upstairs. Hence the hours are long: The first floor is open 11 a.m. to midnight Sunday through Wednesday and 11 a.m. to 2 a.m. Thursday through Saturday. The second floor is open 5 to 10 p.m. daily. Check out the menu at merchantsrestaurant.com or call 254-1892 for more info. Reservations are also available online at [OpenTable](#).

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