

Chef Coles Elevates Southern Cuisine At Jimmy Madison's

April 20, 2016 by [Guest](#)

By Katelyn Quinley — It's been just over a year since [Jimmy Madison's Southern Kitchen & Whiskey Bar](#) took up residence in the former location of Dave's Taverna—a year, and regrettably I am just now checking it out. I couldn't have picked a better time. Executive Chef Isaac Coles has only been in the kitchen at Jimmy Madison's since January, but he has already made his mark on the menu, bringing with him a strong passion for the farm-to-fork concept—something owner Jeff Ramsey was hoping for in a new chef. “We support farmers. They support us—that's the beauty of community,” Coles said. “For the restaurant, sourcing local food is still in the development stages. It's definitely not as extensive as I'd like it to be. But, on my days off that's what I'm doing—visiting farms, talking with people at the [Farmers Market](#), and making connections with local organizations such as the [Fields of Gold Farm Trail](#) and the Turkey Federation. We're hoping to add fried turkey legs on the menu instead of fried chicken wings.” The turkey legs are a great example of Coles' unique blend of innovation paired with Southern tradition—something that is clearly apparent in the newly released lunch and dinner menus. “‘Modern Southern' is the concept here,” Coles said of the restaurant's style. His own roots are strongly influencing many of the dishes. “Baked peanuts is one of the new things you'll see,” he said. “My grandfather was born in Surry on a peanut and tobacco farm during the Depression, so peanuts are a natural addition to the menu.”

Originally from Bedford, Virginia with family in Bridgewater as well, Coles is no stranger to the area. “I grew up on a cattle farm of about 250-acres, so I spent a lot of time outdoors, working with my mom in the garden and my dad with the cattle.” He decided it was time to come back home after being on a ten year “culinary pilgrimage” across the U.S., cooking in kitchens in New Orleans, Las Vegas, Big Sur, Napa Valley, and Charleston.

Other ingredients patrons can expect to see in new dishes at Jimmy Madison's are oysters, crab, turkey, apples, and maple syrup. “Duck is one of my favorite things,” he added, “so you'll see that as a dish as well.”

After trying the Seared Duck Breast, it's now one of my favorites too. The dish utilizes five different techniques of cooking duck, and is served on rice with an apple fois sauce. It is bursting with flavor!

The Chicken & the Egg is Coles' creative take on deviled eggs. "There are probably few people who take food as seriously as I do, but sometimes I like to have a little fun with naming the food." Served on a bed of kale and topped with BBQ chicken, pickled mustard seeds and what he calls 'cracklin crumble'—a pork rind based topping for a bit of crunch—these aren't the kind of deviled eggs you would expect.

All the dishes are beautifully plated and rich with color and texture. Coles' beet salad was so beautifully arranged, I almost didn't want to disturb it with my fork. This is yet another example of his ability to take a classic dish and elevate it to a new level. The roasted beets are served with pickled peaches (yes, it sounds strange but it's delicious), goat cheese coulis and topped with micro greens and a honey thyme vinaigrette. In other words, not your grandma's beets.

With [Taste of Downtown](#), Harrisonburg's restaurant week kicking off on Sunday, it's a great time to head over and sample the new fare. Jimmy Madison's will be offering three courses for \$30 during the event.

Bon Appétit!