

Dining Out

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NEIGHBORHOOD NOSH / KOZMO GASTRO PUB, Alpharetta

A taste of the city hits suburbs

By **BOB TOWNSEND**
For the Journal-Constitution

New rule: You can't call your restaurant a "gastropub" if the most exotic beers at the bar are Sweetwater 420 and Yuengling Lager.

Snarking aside, Kozmo Gastro Pub is the epitome of a contemporary eating and drinking establishment well suited to its place and time.

The atmosphere and the menu manage to be casual yet sophisticated. And the prices are in keeping with economic hard times, with many items in the \$10 range and entrees topping out at \$14.99 for a flatiron steak and fries.

Urban sensibility

Kozmo owner Oswald Morgan is a New York and Atlanta restaurant veteran who most recently served as one of the partners of the Globe Restaurant & Bar in Midtown. With the help of architect Judy Gordon, Morgan has done a good job bringing the cool, urban sensibility of the Globe to a suburban strip center in the Johns Creek area.

The interior is enveloped in a muted color palette, mixing gray, green and neutral tones. Industrial lighting, large chalkboard menus, neat rows of cozy booths divided by knee walls, and a framed view into the kitchen give the space a clean, organized feel that somehow still takes on a sexy glow in the evening.

On a recent weeknight, the 20-seat bar was definitely the place to be, with exuberant regulars and a few curious onlookers crowding onto nearly every one of the Philippe Starck-style aluminum stools. A small party took up residence at the nearby high-top communal table, sending shouts and murmurs in the direction of bartender Jimmy Rudnick, who was busy



BECKY STEIN / Special

The Bacon Cheese Kozmo Burger is topped with caramelized onions, cheese, shredded lettuce, tomato, mayonnaise and bacon, and is served with fries.

AT A GLANCE

► **Where:** 11890 Douglas Road, Suite 105, Alpharetta. 678-526-6094

► **Signature dish:** Kozmo sirloin and brisket burger

► **Entree prices:** \$8.99-\$14.99

► **Hours:** 11:30 a.m. to 11 p.m. Mondays-Thursdays; 11:30 a.m. to 12 a.m. Fridays and Saturdays. Bar open late.

► **Reservations:** For parties of six or more

► **Credit cards:** Yes

► **Online:** www.kozmogastropub.com

mixing cocktails — including his signature Kozmopolitan, made with fresh lime and cranberry juice.

Best burger

The Kozmo menu, executed by chef Travis Collum (another

Globe veteran), is divided between snacks, salads, sandwiches, entrees and sides. Taking a page from the kind of brag you might find at a retro '50s diner, it boldly proclaims "the Best Burger in Town."

Of course, when it comes to the opinions of burger fanatics, that's always up for debate. One thing's for sure, the Kozmo Burger is a quality product, freshly ground and handmade from a mix of sirloin and brisket, à la the much touted burger at New York City's Shake Shack. Ordered mid-rare, it comes out juicy-pink, with a nicely seared, peppery crust, encased in a perfect-size Alon's Bakery brioche bun, and covered with a flavorful mix of white cheddar, caramelized onions, shredded lettuce, tomato and mayo.

The vegetable melt is nearly as good; it's quite a meaty melange of well-seasoned, grilled portobello mushrooms, red peppers and onions, topped with white cheddar and tomatoes and served on airy Alon's ciabatta bread.

Starters range from tempura-battered shrimp with spicy mayo to white bean hummus and hefty "house poutine" fries, loaded with braised brisket, gravy and cheese.

Solid, reasonably priced entrees include herb-roasted chicken with whipped potatoes, short rib papperdelle mixed with horseradish, and pan-roasted salmon with white bean ragout. On "comfort Tuesdays" there's fried chicken with two sides for \$11.99.



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