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DAILY SPECIALS

Monday

\$3.50 AMSTEL & HEINEKEN

\$10 HOUSE WINE BOTTLES
\$3 SoCo SHOTS

Tuesday

\$3 CHICAGO CRAFT DRAFTS

\$3 WELL DRINKS
\$3 RUMPLE, BLACK HAUS, GOLDSCHLAGER

Thursday

\$3.50 CRAFT BOTTLES (UNDER 6% ABV)

\$4 BOMBS

Wednesday

TRIVIA NIGHT! 8PM START — \$50 PRIZE

\$2 PBR DRAFTS
\$10 BUD & BUD LIGHT BUCKETS
\$3 FIRE EATER SHOTS

Friday

\$4 GUINNESS & CARLSBERG DRAFTS

\$4 JACK & CAPTAIN

\$10 COORS & COORS LIGHT BUCKETS

\$3 DON JULIO
BLANCO SHOTS

Saturday

\$10 MILLER BUCKETS

\$4 STOLI BLOODYS
\$4 BACARDI

Sunday

\$10 MILLER BUCKETS

\$4 STOLI BLOODYS
\$4 BACARDI



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WHERE THERE'S SMOKE ...

Rib tips
HILARY HIGGINS/
REDEYE PHOTOS

County Barbecue
1352 W. Taylor St. 312-929-2528
Give it some time



Bacon barbecue parfait

Michael Kornick and company bring barbecue to Little Italy

By Michael Nagrant | FOR REDEYE

If you've ever smoked a perfect rack of ribs, it's easy to understand how a thousand barbecue joints have been launched. The beauty of a pink smoke ring and juicy shards of freshly pulled meat inspire a confidence that you were born to bring the gospel of barbecued meat to the masses. But opening a barbecue joint is different from being a confident weekend warrior. Producing a toothsome rib with a lacquered crust for hundreds of people requires remarkable patience and consistency. Far from a cooking dilettante, Michael Kornick is a seasoned chef with quite the pedigree—he owns MK and with partner David Morton also runs DMK Burger Bar, Fish Bar and Ada Street—and has incredible command of Chicago's culinary history. When Kornick and Morton announced their first barbecue restaurant in Little Italy, County, I wondered whether they'd have the luck of a one-rib wonder or the heart of a southern pitmaster.

The scene: This address used to house Italian red-sauce joint Gennaro's. Kornick and his partners kept the original Gennaro's bar and the rich, dark wainscoting (Kornick said, "I have this desire to preserve historic things about Chicago. I was chef at the Pump

Room. I love old joints."), but they outfitted it with a trophy-mounted deer and vintage American flags, giving the place a Northwoods man-cabin feel.

The meat: Veal brisket (\$12), a cut chosen for its tenderness and flavor, was parchment dry. Considering the portion size—three strips of veal, a tiny tangle of cole slaw and a few pickles—this plate was pretty pricey. (When I later asked Kornick about it, he said it should've been a 6- to 7-ounce portion, so mine may have been an anomaly.) Rib tips (\$10), inspired by Kornick's childhood stops at Lem's BBQ with his dad for rib tips before going to Sox games, were meatier than average, but were also dry. The hot link (\$4) was spicy and juicy with a nice snappy casing.

The sides: Side dishes were much better. Fluffy corn pudding studded with scallions (\$5) wafted a beautiful buttery perfume. Crisp, tangy cornmeal-dusted wheels of fried green tomato (\$6) were complimented well by a minty whipped goat cheese dip. The bacon and barbecue parfait (\$3), a little shooter of cloud-like mashed potatoes and tender braised and smoked bits of juicy rib flap meat, was a glorious savory pork sundae—like an American response to shepherd's pie. Collards (\$3), made with executive chef Erick Williams' grandmother's recipe, Kornick said, were undersalted and a little tough.

The drinks: The Rye Smile (\$9; rye, ginger

syrup, lemon juice and a touch of soda) was refreshing and balanced. The sidecar (\$9; cognac, triple sec and lemon juice) burst with citrus, had a honey-like finish and was a spot-on execution of the classic cocktail.

The service: County's bar takes up a large portion of the dining room, and there's a good chance you'll end up sitting at it. Bartenders are rarely known for their food knowledge, but mine was tirelessly enthusiastic and never stumped by my questions.

Bottom line: County is a great night out if you want attentive bar service, solid drinks and cheffed-up gourmet sides. But the heart of a barbecue restaurant is its smoked meat, and right now, that's what needs some work.

MICHAEL NAGRANT IS A REDEYE SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR. REPORTERS VISIT RESTAURANTS UNANNOUNCED AND MEALS ARE PAID FOR BY REDEYE. REDEYE@TRIBUNE.COM | @REDEYEATDRINK