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CLEAN PLATE CLUB

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Big Rock Chop House

Twists on American Fare

It's not very hard to find high-end steak houses in metro-Detroit, but finding one that specializes in local flavors takes a little more work. Once you leave the chain places behind you'll find yourself at the Big Rock Chop House in Birmingham.

Nestled inside the Birmingham train station, Big Rock Chop House prides itself on being different and being a "scene." They regularly feature local ingredients and wines and many surprising menu items. They're also known for classic steaks, and that famous on-site brewery makes for a delicious experience. Executive chef, Brian Henson, has built a menu that twists traditional American dishes.



Along with six different cuts of steak (including a 14-oz. bone-in filet mignon) you will find a Buffalo steak option. Try the Duck Confit, a leg that has cured for 48 hours and cooked with Cajun seasoning in foie gras fat. It comes with a wild mushroom ragu with red wine braised shallots and risotto.

Seafood choices include the Sautéed Snapper, a filet served over potato hash with chili parsnip puree and garnished with red pepper chutney. A hugely popular seafood dish is the Togarashi Salmon. It comes with stir-fry vegetables in a lemongrass and Yuzu sauce and Basmati rice. A Great Lakes whitefish (baked after being wrapped in their own beer-soaked wood paper) and an unusual lobster and scallop ravioli round out the seafood.

The lunch menu changes frequently and always offers daily specials. Try the popular lobster grilled cheese accompanied by tomato bisque. They also have a new spin on mac and cheese. Theirs is a crab cake, bacon and spinach with Brie cheese. The menu changes seasonally to take advantage of the local offerings and Big Rock often holds specials on locally made wines. The award-winning wine list is updated frequently and boasts some of the most affordable vintages around. The staff is trained to know the wines, and will be more than happy to offer pairings. Bottle or "by the glass" service is available.

As if a huge wine list wasn't enough, Big Rock is also a brewery. Brewmaster Dan Rogers keeps eight varieties on tap along with four varieties that they bottle. Try the bottled Red Rock and see why it's a silver medal winner. The beers also change seasonally; try the Hellerboch and Czech pilsner while they last.

Big Rock Chop House is ready for any size or type of party you may have. The Got Rocks? Lounge is a cozy cigar and martini bar ready for your relaxing, or have your group reserve the wine cellar. Located downstairs, this room was once the tunnel for northbound trains at the station. The stone terrace room, the patio and the Cascade can all be used for parties, and The Reserve next door is for very large groups. (The Reserve has a separate menu, contact for details.)

Big Rock Chop House sets itself apart from the run-of-the-mill steak house by keeping its flavors fresh and local and adapting to the taste of its customers. Great steaks, wines and beers along with unusual choices keep its customers coming back. | **RDW**