

EAT

NEIGHBORHOOD NOSH

5th Earl Market

309 E. College Ave., Decatur, 404-377-5477

By BOB TOWNSEND / For accessAtlanta



5TH EARL MARKET is slyly named for English nobleman John Montagu, the 5th Earl of Sandwich. But if imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, it wouldn't be

unkind to call this pleasant storefront shop the poor man's Muss & Turner's. Like the Smyrna restaurant, Decatur's 5th Earl features a deli/sandwich shop and wine and beer bar — albeit smaller and a bit less sophisticated in its offerings.

BRICKS AND TILES: Located next to the Agnes Scott campus, 5th Earl boasts a warm interior with lots of exposed brick (which seems to have become de rigueur in Decatur, since the Brick Store Pub started the trend a decade ago). You order at the counter and find a seat in the cozy dining area, where tall windows, rustic tile floors and metal patio furniture make for a sun room-style aura. Farther back, the small bar, with a few stools and a couple of high tables, feels more comfy and secluded. Neat deli cases display fancy takeaway foods, from hummus and salads to packaged cheeses and house-

made soups.

MONTAGU'S LEGACY: Fittingly, the main menu is mostly sandwiches, divided among cold, hot and paninis, with imaginative mixes of meats, cheeses and veggies. All served on breads and rolls from Le Petite Bakery, most have names that evoke a Monty Python version of Medieval England. The Nobleman layers shaved prosciutto, Parmesan cheese as well as field greens dressed with olive oil, lemon juice and cracked pepper, between crispy pieces of flat bread. The Moat is hearty barbecue brisket, which has the stringy texture of ropa vieja; it's simmered in a



BECKY STERN / Special

The Moat is hearty barbecue brisket simmered in a smoky-sweet red sauce, then covered with a creamy white sauce. Other goodies at the shop include the Duke of Earl sandwich and salads.

smoky-sweet red sauce, covered with a creamy, piquant white sauce and heaped on a crusty Italian-style roll. Duke of Earl is a basic but tasty combo of sliced chicken breast with pesto, caramelized onions and melted mozzarella on a baguette. Simpler still, Earl's Yard is a panini-style press of fresh mozzarella, tomatoes, basil and olive oil.

SALADS AND SWEETS: Salads include versions of classics such as Caesar with romaine and Greek with feta and kalamata olives. Beet & Blue is a sweet and tangy melange of mixed greens, beets, blue cheese, candied walnuts and dried cranberries tossed in a fruity vinaigrette.

For those with a bigger sweet tooth there are cookies, cupcakes, brownies and mini tarts from Sweet n' Sinful in nearby Avondale. In an area where families buy houses just to be in the city school district, it pays to have a kids' menu. The 5th Earl's is limited to four sandwiches, including peanut butter and jelly and grilled cheese, all served with a small cup of fresh fruit salad.

AT THE BAR: While locals have been packing the 5th Earl at lunchtime, evenings are sometimes conspicuously less hectic. On a recent weeknight, a couple of beer buddies were the only ones at the bar. But the solid draft offerings have included

HOURS: 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Tuesdays-Thursdays, 10 a.m.-10 p.m. Fridays-Saturdays, 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Sunday (closed Mondays)

CREDIT CARDS: MasterCard, Visa, American Express

PRICES: Soups and salads, \$3.75-\$7.25; sandwiches, \$5.50-\$8.95; desserts, \$1.35-\$2.50

RESERVATIONS: No

RECOMMENDED DISHES: Duke of Earl sandwich; Beet & Blue salad

PARKING: In lot

TAKEOUT: Yes

VERDICT

Sandwich shop and wine bar makes another pleasant Decatur neighborhood addition.

Dogfish Head 90 Minute IPA, Hebrew Messiah, Highland Gaelic and North Coast Red Seal. And the wine selections, though less adventurous, are reasonably priced. On Monday nights, when the restaurant is normally closed, guest chef Carmen Capello sometimes presents a monthly series of beer dinners. In July, Capello will pair beers from Flying Dog Brewery.