

INLAND EMPIRE & THE DESERT

Blackburn's Farm to Table

BY ROGER GRODY
PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROB ANDREW

The *farm-to-table* culinary philosophy is a common mantra among chefs these days, but veteran caterer and private chef Bill Blackburn takes it seriously enough to put it into the name of his restaurant. Blackburn's Farm to Table in Corona features an American menu built around seasonal, local ingredients.

The restaurant, tucked into a shopping center off State Route 91, occupies a modest space seating fewer than 40 guests. Views of the open kitchen are provided from blond-wood tables, while walls are lined with eclectic art—everything from abstract watercolors to a butcher's diagram of a pig—and the restaurant's logo, a vintage tractor. Although prices are reasonable, some customers may be disappointed by the coffee shop-like simplicity of the space, feeling the kitchen's fine dining aspirations deserve more pampering.

The menu, all-American comfort food with a few international influences, features a variety of small plates such as good quality 'ahi tuna, seared rare, drizzled with a mild wasabi aioli, and accompanied by tropical fruit salsa. Mac-and-cheese is laced with shrimp and crab, while three miniature tender lamb chops, easy to pick up by the bones, arrive with a pleasantly salty mint pesto sauce for dipping.

Entrées include a massive center-cut pork chop with seasonal fruit and sides, whether caramelized peaches with truffle-mashed potatoes or cranberries with sweet potatoes. The lobster ravioli is exceptional, with slightly al dente pasta stuffed with Maine lobster meat, thoroughly bathed in a sherry-cream sauce in which sun-dried tomatoes impart an extra level of interest. Herb-crusted salmon arrives with a light Moroccan-spiced honey-based sauce that enhances, rather than detracts from, the perfectly roasted fish. Most of Blackburn's menu reads staid and predictable, but his restrained use of eclectic flavors is effective.

The tiny wine list, with offerings from California, New Zealand, and Chile, appears little more than an afterthought, but desserts are worth exploring. Among the options are a thin apple galette with raspberry syrup or a homey hunk of bread pudding with caramel-*rum* sauce.

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■ **INFO:** 4300 Green River Road, Suite 106, Corona. (951) 264-6807; blackburnsfarmtotable.com

■ **SETTING:** Minimalist shopping center space with open kitchen; a relatively spartan environment

■ **SERVICE:** Not polished, but warm and gracious

■ **BEST DISHES:** Miniature lamb chops with mint pesto, lobster ravioli, Moroccan-spiced salmon, bread pudding with caramel-*rum* sauce

■ **DINNER PRICES:** Starters, \$6-\$12; entrées, \$13-\$29; desserts, \$7-\$9



(Clockwise from opposite page) Blackburn's Farm to Table in Corona has a seasonal menu that might include lamb chops with pesto, Moroccan-spiced salmon, lobster ravioli, and bread pudding with caramel-*rum* sauce.

