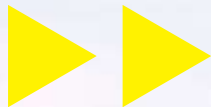


An aerial photograph of the Atlanta skyline, featuring prominent skyscrapers like the Georgia State Capitol and the Bank of America Tower. The city is densely packed with buildings, and a highway interchange is visible in the lower left. The sky is overcast.

TASTEMAKERS



atlanta

BY VIRGINIA WILLIS

FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY BY KIMBERLY FINKEL DAVIS

FOOD STYLING BY AIMEE BISHOP / PHOTO STYLING BY MALINDA KAY NICHOLS

PHOTO BY KELLIE SLIWA

W

TASTEMAKERS ARE THOSE WHO DETERMINE or strongly influence current trends or styles, as in fashion, food, or the arts. Atlanta, Georgia, is home to some of the best restaurants in the country—tastemakers, if you will. Chefs in Atlanta are championing local, artisanal, and seasonal products and vegetables for their clientele, and the food scene is vibrant with shops and stores that cater to these newly inspired diners. The hotels are on par with those of any major city, from boutique to Five Star Diamond. Here are some absolute essentials for visiting. From haute cuisine to down-home cooking, Atlanta has it all.

Ann's Snack Bar

1615 Memorial Drive, 404-687-9207

I first tried the Ghetto Burger at Ann's Snack Bar several years before *The Wall Street Journal* rated it the No. 1 burger in America. Miss Ann is like your first-grade teacher, very nice, but she means business. As I stood in the small space to order, a man leaned over and whispered, "Don't stand there, she gonna yell at you." I leaned forward to watch her preparation more closely, and the man nudged me and whispered again, "Don't lean on her counter, she gonna yell at you." I watched as she reached her hand into a bucket of meat and slapped two gigantic mounds on the grill. The end result, many, many moments later, was the Ghetto Burger, a glorious feast of a toasted bun, the giant patties, smothered in seasoning salt, cheese, and onions, and topped with lettuce, tomato, mayonnaise, ketchup, mustard, meaty chili, and deep-fried bacon. It is not a place to eat; it is an experience. Make sure to take your appetite and a good book to read, and be prepared for a long wait.



PHOTO BY KELLIE SLIWA

Bacchanalia

1198 Howell Mill Road, 404-365-0410,
www.starprovisions.com

A renovated factory on Howell Mill Road on the west side of midtown Atlanta holds Bacchanalia, the city's most celebrated restaurant and renowned as one of the finest in the entire nation. The restaurant has been rated by the Zagat Guide as the No. 1 restaurant in Atlanta for the past seven years. The husband-and-wife chef-owner team of Anne Quatrano and Clifford Harrison has won many prestigious awards including the Oscar of the food world, the James Beard Best Chef in the Southeast. Their menu features contemporary American cuisine with an emphasis on seasonal, local, and organic—some of the produce even comes from their farm. Their attention to detail from the menu to the décor is nothing short of masterful. The restaurant is clean and simple, and although casually elegant, not the kind of place in which you need to worry about which fork to use. Bacchanalia offers a four-course prix-fixe menu—appetizer, entrée, cheeses, and dessert—for \$75 per person. It's truly world-class food at an amazing price.



pan-seared north georgia rainbow trout with muscadines

Recipe courtesy of Anne Quatrano,
Bacchanalia

Yield: 4 servings

Preparation: 1 hour

Cook: 20 minutes

Bake: 10 minutes

- 1 cup sultana raisins
- 1 cup sweet Riesling wine
- 4 (6-ounce) Georgia trout fillets, with skin on
- Salt to taste
- Ground black pepper to taste
- 2 teaspoons olive oil, divided
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 sprigs rosemary, divided
- 1 clove garlic, left whole
- 1 clove garlic, thinly sliced
- 1 cup verjus* or raisin vinegar
- 1 cup chicken stock
- 1 pint fresh muscadines, peeled and seeded
- 2 tablespoons cold butter
- Garnish: fresh rosemary

PREHEAT oven to 400°.

PLUMP sultanas in wine over low heat until they are full and soft. Set aside.

SEASON trout with salt and pepper on both sides; set aside.

IN A CAST-IRON SKILLET, heat

1 teaspoon olive oil, bay leaf, 1 sprig rosemary, and whole garlic clove over medium heat. Add trout fillets, skin side down, and sear for approximately 2 minutes, or until skin is crisp and brown.

PLACE pan in oven for 5 to 10 minutes, depending on desired temperature of trout and thickness of fillets.

IN ANOTHER SKILLET, heat remaining 1 teaspoon olive oil over medium heat. Add sliced garlic and verjus; cook for 5 minutes, or until mixture is slightly reduced. Add chicken stock and remaining rosemary sprig; let simmer for 5 minutes. Add sultanas and their soaking liquid and muscadines. Turn off heat and add butter, stirring until combined. Season with salt and pepper.

PLACE trout on a warmed plate, skin side up. Spoon liquid and fruit over trout. Garnish with rosemary, if desired.



For more food by Anne Quatrano, turn to page 88.

* *Verjus is an acidic liquid made from semiripe wine grapes. It adds zest and flavor to sauces and marinades, and it can be used as a nonalcoholic substitute for wine. Verjus is traditionally produced in Perigord, France, but we found a good source on this side of the Atlantic: Terra Sonoma Food Company in Geyserville, California, www.terrasonoma.com. You may also substitute 1/2 cup apple-cider vinegar and 1/2 cup white grape juice for 1 cup verjus.*



Harold's Barbecue

171 McDonough Boulevard SE, 404-627-9268
www.haroldsbarbecue.com

Harold's has been an Atlanta tastemaker since 1947. Red and white checkered tablecloths, bars on the windows, and real pine panels (not paneling) create the scene at this barbecue joint just down the road from the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary. In a very certain Southern gothic way, this church of 'cue seems very much out of the pages of a novel by Flannery O'Connor. The smoky chopped or sliced pork is served up in a sandwich or on a platter with a vinegar-tomato sauce. The homemade crackling cornbread is stellar, and the thick, rich Brunswick stew, studded with tomatoes and corn, is by far the best in town. It's definitely worth a barbecue pilgrimage.

Rathbun's

112 Krog Street, Suite R
 404-524-8280,
www.rathbunsrestaurant.com

Kevin Rathbun and his brother Kent, a chef from Dallas, shook up the food world by handily beating Bobby Flay on *Iron Chef America*. The brothers are gentle giants and could easily pass for pro-football defensive linemen, but finesse is what won the prize. Kevin continues to rattle the Atlanta food scene with Rathbun's, his original restaurant that features modern American cuisine; Krog Bar, a Mediterranean wine bar that focuses on small plates; and the latest addition to his portfolio, Kevin Rathbun Steak, a modern American steakhouse with a nod to his Kansas City roots. All restaurants are in historic Inman Park, a great dining destination if you are staying downtown, mere miles away. At Rathbun's, begin with the eggplant fries or take advantage of Kevin's creativity with one of the other intriguing appetizers. For the main course, try a "Big Plate," or be really ambitious with what is amusingly referred to as a "Second Mortgage" plate. Sure, it will set you back, but when you dine at Rathbun's, you're living large.



Repast

620 North Glen Iris Drive
 404-870-8707
www.repastrestaurant.com

Louisiana native Joe Truex and his wife, Mihoko Obunai, who hails from Japan, have delighted Atlantans with Repast. Their innovative cuisine is new American with Asian inspiration and a metropolitan kick. The casual neighborhood restaurant in Poncy Highlands has received media accolades. Diners can choose from an array of seasonally influenced dishes or from a tasting menu that changes nightly. Only at Repast can one find Mihoko's version of a Southern vegetable plate (referred to as the "Daily Macrobiotic"), featuring local organic vegetables, whole grains, and house-made tofu, adjacent to Joe's butter-poached Georgia shrimp served with Anson Mills grits, Allan Benton's smoked country bacon, and a farm-fresh free-range egg. East meets West in the South, and it never tasted so good.



Son's Place

100 Hurt Street NE, 404-581-0530
www.sonsplacereastaurant.com

When you enter Son's Place, owner Lenn Storey's deep booming voice will make you feel truly welcome. The service at Son's Place is cafeteria style. Start by grabbing an ice-cold glass of the best sweet tea in the South. Then, pick up your silverware, and just order the fried chicken. Yes, you can look and be tempted by the array of delicious dishes in the steam table in front of you, such as the smothered pork chops or the chicken and dumplings, but don't do it. Order the skillet-fried chicken. Not deep-fried in a massive vat, but skillet-fried and lovingly turned one piece at a time by hand. The side dishes are poetic—smoky, salty collards in pot likker; creamy lima beans; macaroni and cheese; and rice and gravy. Choose from biscuits, rolls, or corncakes. I take all my out-of-town guests to Son's Place. Oh, and make sure to tell Lenn you are a newcomer. If you thought your welcome was inviting, wait until you hear the goodbye.



son's place fried chicken

Recipe courtesy of Lenn Storey, Son's Place
 Yield: 6 servings
 Preparation: 5 minutes
 Brine: 30 minutes
 Cook: approximately 20 minutes per batch

8 cups water
 1/3 cup plus 1 teaspoon salt,
 divided
 3 tablespoons plus 1/2 teaspoon
 ground black pepper, divided
 1 (2 1/2-pound) chicken, cut into 6
 pieces, leaving drumstick and
 thigh together
 2 cups White Lily self-rising flour
 Vegetable oil for frying

IN A LARGE MIXING BOWL, combine water, 1/3 cup salt, and 3 tablespoons pepper. Stir until salt dissolves. Place chicken in salted water, submerging all pieces. Let soak for 30 minutes. **DRAIN** chicken on a wire cooling rack placed over a rimmed baking sheet. Do not pat dry. Sprinkle with remaining 1 teaspoon salt and 1/2 teaspoon pepper. **DREDGE** chicken pieces in flour to coat. **HEAT** a large cast-iron skillet over medium heat. Add enough vegetable oil to come halfway up the sides. Heat oil to 360° to 380°. Carefully add chicken to hot oil. Turn dark meat after approximately 8 minutes and turn breasts after approximately 10

minutes. (Breasts take approximately 20 minutes to cook, wings 8 minutes, and drumstick/thigh 16 minutes.)

DRAIN chicken on a clean cooling rack placed over a clean rimmed baking sheet.





Watershed

406 West Ponce de Leon Avenue
(Decatur), 404-378-4900,
www.watershedrestaurant.com

Housed in a converted gas station in downtown Decatur, Watershed offers some of Atlanta's best dining in a casual, relaxed atmosphere and neighborhood setting. Watershed is the collaboration of Emily Saliers of the Indigo Girls and James Beard award-winning chef Scott Peacock. A former chef at the Georgia Governor's mansion and longtime friend and colleague of legendary cook Edna Lewis, Scott stays true to his Alabama roots and specializes in seasonal Southern cooking. The menu includes dishes like Creamy Stone-Ground Shrimp Grits served with a toasted Pullman plank; a hot vegetable plate of green beans simmered in pork stock, crispy fried okra, creamed corn, or fried cauliflower; and Grilled All-Natural Pork Chop with Mac-n-Cheese. The food is satisfying, unpretentious, and comfortable, as is the setting. A rich wedge of The Very Good Chocolate Cake with a glass of milk makes a happy ending to your meal.

COOK'S TREASURES AND TREATS



The Cook's Warehouse

549-I Amsterdam Avenue NE, 404-815-4993,
4062 Peachtree Road, 404-949-9945
180 West Ponce de Leon Avenue (Decatur), 404-377-4005
www.cookswarehouse.com

What do you call a place that's filled to the brim with the finest cookware and tools and contains a cooking school that offers more than 150 classes per quarter taught by renowned guest chefs in four kitchens at three locations? A warehouse? It's more like a cook's heaven. And this place has soul. Former chef Mary Moore, a real person—not a conglomerate or stockholders—owns it. She's a powerhouse in the local culinary community and supports many great causes including The Atlanta Community Food Bank. Drop by one of the locations (Midtown, Brookhaven, or Decatur) and support a locally owned shop.

mimi's angel food cake

Recipe courtesy of Mary Moore, The Cook's Warehouse

Yield: 1 (10-inch) cake

Preparation: 18 minutes

Bake: 30 minutes

Cool: 1 hour 30 minutes

1½ cups sugar, divided

1⅛ cups sifted cake flour

¼ teaspoon salt

1½ cups egg whites (from approximately 10 to 12 large eggs)

1¼ teaspoons cream of tartar

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

PREHEAT oven to 375°.

IN A MEDIUM BOWL, combine ¾ cup sugar, flour, and salt, whisking to blend.

IN A LARGE MIXING BOWL, beat egg whites at low speed with an electric mixer until frothy. Add cream of tartar, increase speed to high, and beat until soft peaks form when the beater is raised. Gradually add remaining ¾ cup sugar, beating until very stiff peaks form when the beater is raised slowly. **ADD** vanilla to egg-white mixture. Gently sprinkle flour mixture over whites in four additions, folding in quickly but gently. After last addition, fold a few extra times to make sure flour is well blended. (Mixture doesn't have to be perfect.)

POUR batter into a 9-inch or 10-inch ungreased tube pan. Drop the pan once on the counter to release any air bubbles.

BAKE for 30 to 35 minutes for a 10-inch cake and 35 to 40 minutes for a 9-inch cake, or until a cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean and cake springs back when lightly pressed.

REMOVE from oven and invert pan on a rack or suspend by the tube on a bottle. Let cool completely in the pan for 1 to 1½ hours.

LOOSEN sides and middle of cake with a metal spatula. Remove cake from pan and invert on a serving plate. Wrap airtight to store.



The cooking school of The Cook's Warehouse offers a variety of classes taught by renowned guest chefs for all skill levels and tastes.



Via Elisa Fresh Pasta

1750C Howell Mill Road, 404-605-0668, www.viaelisa.com

I often describe the incredible pasta from this shop by saying that the only ingredients not imported from Italy are the eggs. Owner Elisa Gambino started making pasta while working as a CNN producer based in the Middle East. Her hub was Rome, and she would take a hot plate and cook pasta in her hotel room for friends and colleagues. When she moved to Atlanta, she couldn't find the fresh pasta she loved, so she returned to Rome and studied pasta making with one of Italy's premier pasta makers. She opened Via Elisa in Atlanta in 2002 and found a devoted following for her pastas made from organically grown flours, free-range eggs, and imported Italian cheeses. If you don't have a hot plate in your hotel room while visiting Atlanta, you can order the pasta online for overnight delivery.



PHOTOS BY KELLIE SLIMA

via elisa sweet potato ravioli with brown butter and pine nuts

Recipe courtesy of Elisa Gambino, Via Elisa

Yield: 4 servings

Preparation: 5 minutes

Cook: 30 minutes

Bake: 8 minutes

- 1 (12-ounce) package Via Elisa fresh sweet potato ravioli or cheese ravioli*
- 5 tablespoons cold, unsalted butter, divided
- 1/4 cup dry white wine
- 2 tablespoons chopped shallot
- 1 teaspoon chopped garlic
- 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice, or to taste
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
- Garnish: 1/4 cup toasted pine nuts†

BRING a large pot of salted water to a rolling boil. Add pasta and cook according to package instructions. **WHILE PASTA IS COOKING**, brown 3 tablespoons butter over medium heat in a small saucepan. Add wine, shallot, and garlic. Simmer for 2 minutes, or until reduced to approximately 2 tablespoons. Remove from heat. **CUT** remaining 2 tablespoons butter into pieces and add at once. Cook over moderately low heat, swirling pan constantly, just until creamy and butter is incorporated. Do not overheat. Remove pan from heat and stir in lemon juice and salt and pepper to taste. **DRAIN** ravioli well and transfer to individual serving bowls. Spoon sauce over ravioli. Garnish with toasted pine nuts, if desired. Serve immediately.

*Available at Whole Foods Market and online at www.viaelisa.com.

†To toast pine nuts, place on a small baking sheet and toast in 350° oven for 6 to 8 minutes.



Hotel Indigo

683 Peachtree Street NE, 404-874-9200, www.hotelindigo.com

Hotel Indigo, located directly across the street from the fabulous Fox Theatre in the heart of midtown, is Atlanta's premier branded boutique hotel. Known for its unique design and appealing architecture, Hotel Indigo Atlanta Midtown offers guests open-spaced rooms painted in soft, earthy colors plus cozy beds and oversize down pillows for a guaranteed good night's sleep. The hotel also accommodates pets. In fact, it features a "Canine Cocktail Hour" on Tuesdays for both master and pooch with doggie treats and signature people drinks.



Marriott Marquis

265 Peachtree Center Avenue NE, 404-521-0000, www.marriott.com

Recently renovated, the interior of the Marriott Marquis is stunning: A massive atrium stretches all the way to the top. This hotel ranks well with families because it is conveniently located in Peachtree Center with an indoor connection to MARTA. And it's a quick 15-minute ride from Hartsfield Jackson International Airport. In the heart of downtown, it's also mere blocks from the Georgia Aquarium, World of Coca-Cola, CNN Center, Georgia World Congress Center, Philips Arena, and the Georgia Dome.



WHERE TO STAY

Hotel Indigo

683 Peachtree Street NE, 404-874-9200, www.hotelindigo.com

Hotel Indigo, located directly across the street from the fabulous Fox Theatre in the heart of midtown, is Atlanta's premier branded boutique hotel. Known for its unique design and appealing architecture, Hotel Indigo Atlanta Midtown offers guests open-spaced rooms painted in soft, earthy colors plus cozy beds and oversize down pillows for a guaranteed good night's sleep. The hotel also accommodates pets. In fact, it features a "Canine Cocktail Hour" on Tuesdays for both master and pooch with doggie treats and signature people drinks.





**The Ritz-Carlton,
Buckhead**
3434 Peachtree Road NE,
404-237-2700
www.ritzcarlton.com

With easy access to premier shopping and nightlife, The Ritz-Carlton, Buckhead, is undoubtedly one of the finest hotels in the city. Ideal for a romantic getaway, it's the place for a special weekend. Boasting Southern hospitality with The Ritz-Carlton's trademark attention to detail, guest services such as "bath butlers" and an on-call seamstress take pampering to a whole new level. It's also home to The Dining Room, a Mobile Five Star restaurant with the talents of chef Arnaud Berthelie.

Virginia Willis is a Georgia girl who has traveled the world as part of her culinary education and career and has chosen to make her home in Atlanta. The author of the acclaimed cookbook, Bon Appétit, Y'all! Three Generations of Southern Cooking (Ten Speed Press, 2008), Virginia served as the kitchen director for Martha Stewart Living Television and later as executive producer for Epicurious on The Discovery Channel. She is a weekly writer for The Atlanta Journal Constitution. Virginia is president of the Atlanta chapter of Les Dames d'Escoffier and a member of The Atlanta Community Food Bank Advisory Board, Georgia Organics, the International Association of Culinary Professionals, Southern Foodways Alliance, and Women Chefs and Restaurateurs.

shrimp and grits

Recipe courtesy of Chef Bennett Hollberg,
Atlanta Grill, The Ritz-Carlton
Yield: 6 servings
Preparation: 40 minutes
Cook: 1 hour

Grits:

- 1¼ cups chicken stock
- 1¼ cups milk
- 1¼ cups cream
- 1¼ teaspoons salt, divided
- ¾ teaspoon ground black pepper, divided
- 1 cup stone-ground grits*
- ¼ cup butter
- 1 cup diced Vidalia onion (approximately ½ onion)
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ cup finely diced red bell pepper
- ½ cup finely diced yellow bell pepper
- ½ cup finely diced poblano pepper
- ½ jalapeño pepper, finely diced
- 1 Roma tomato, seeded and diced
- ¼ cup sour cream

Shrimp:

- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 cup diced Vidalia onion (approximately ½ onion)
- 5 Roma tomatoes, chopped
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
- ¼ cup chopped fresh herbs, such as basil, chives, and thyme
- 1 pound medium shrimp

IN A LARGE SAUCEPAN, combine chicken stock, milk, and cream. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Add 1 teaspoon salt and ½ teaspoon black pepper. Slowly add grits while stirring with a whisk.

REDUCE heat to a simmer and stir

slowly and constantly for at least 2 minutes. Cook on low heat for approximately 30 minutes, or until tender, stirring every 3 to 4 minutes to avoid clumping.

IN A LARGE SKILLET, melt butter over medium-high heat. Add onion and garlic and cook for 2 to 3 minutes, or until onions are translucent. Add peppers, remaining ¼ teaspoon salt, and remaining ¼ teaspoon black pepper and cook for 4 minutes, or until peppers are slightly tender. Add tomato and cook until liquid is released. Reduce heat to low and simmer for approximately 5 minutes. **WHEN GRITS ARE DONE**, add pepper mixture and sour cream to grits, stirring well. Adjust seasoning with salt and pepper to taste.

IN A SKILLET, heat olive oil over medium-high heat. Add onion and cook for 2 to 3 minutes, or until onion is translucent. Add tomatoes, salt, and pepper. Bring to a simmer and cook for 10 minutes, or until sauce looks like a thick puree. Add herbs and adjust seasoning. Set aside.

PREHEAT grill to Medium-High (350° to 400°).

PEEL and devein shrimp. Thread 3 shrimp each onto a bamboo or sugar-cane skewer. Wrap exposed ends of skewer with aluminum foil and grill for 1 to 2 minutes per side, or until shrimp are cooked through.

TO SERVE, place grits in a bowl, spoon sauce around, and place a skewer with shrimp in center of grits.

**For our favorite sources for stone-ground grits, see our Web site, www.tasteofthesouthmagazine.com.*

Taste of Atlanta is a two-day food event held in the streets of Atlantic Station on Saturday and Sunday, October 11 and 12, 2008. Featuring the food of more than 70 restaurants, cooking demonstrations, and entertainment, the event has been ranked a top-10 festival by the Southeast Tourism Society. For more information, visit www.tasteofatlanta.com or call 404-875-4434.

