



### **Atlanta Steps up to the Table**

*Atlanta's dining scene is rewriting the menu  
with greater sophistication and diversity than ever*

**ATLANTA** – Atlanta's dining community has taken its place at the table of culinary cities. With its growth, development and diversity, if you haven't been to Atlanta recently, you've missed the world.

Affordability, variety of restaurants, culinary variety and award-winning chefs are key ingredients in Atlanta's dining scene. An assortment of neighborhoods offers restaurants featuring cuisine that spans the globe, from African to Asian, Cajun to Caribbean, European to Middle Eastern.

"Atlanta has had an influx of high-quality, chef-owned, chef-driven restaurants, which have developed into creative concepts. That keeps dining interesting and exciting," said Pano Karatassos, founder of Buckhead Life Group, a family of 12 restaurants included among Atlanta's finest. "As Atlanta grows, it's attracting a very culturally diverse population, inviting new cuisines, with tapas, Thai, Brazilian steakhouses, Greek cuisine, sushi and the list goes on. It does seem that no matter what the type of food served, it tends to be served with Atlanta's signature Southern hospitality—that's always a huge draw."

#### **Taste the city chefs call home**

Atlanta has emerged as the proud home of many chef-owned and -operated restaurants. With a ripening restaurant industry and economic appeal, Atlanta entices top chefs from around the country to relocate and fulfill their dreams of running their own restaurant. Experience Chef Gerry Klaskala's **Aria**, seducing diners with American cuisine and sexy surroundings. The former Buckhead Diner chef came from the ranks of New York's Culinary Institute of America and has enjoyed a successful career of enthusiastic reviews. **Aria** recently earned the prestigious AAA Four Diamond rating for 2006.

**Rathbun's** in Inman Park is Chef Kevin Rathbun's concept of modern American food. Described as industrial meets modern, Rathbun's opened in 2004 and has a cool, yet vibrant atmosphere. The innovative menu of small plates and "second mortgage" plates reinvents Southern delicacies. In 2005 Rathbun opened a second concept next door called Krog Bar, a Mediterranean wine bar serving cold tapas. The restaurant group will expand again in Spring 2007 when he opens Kevin Rathbun Steak, also to be located in Inman Park. Rathbun has already collected awards for his namesake in *Bon Appetit*, *Travel + Leisure* and *Esquire*.

The deliciously popular **JOËL**, features French-inspired cuisine with Asian and Mediterranean influences and award-winning desserts. Chef Joël Antunes hails from France, previously holding positions at world-class French restaurants. Antunes relocated to the United States to fill the open chef position at The Dining Room at The Ritz-Carlton, Buckhead, formerly held by Guenter Seeger, another esteemed Atlanta chef and restaurateur. In 2001, Antunes opened his own establishment and has since enjoyed a string of accolades.

Step into the arena at **Taurus**, the new American chophouse with a 1950s club feel. Chef Gary Mennie, former executive chef of the popular Canoe, opened this restaurant in 2005 and prepares select meats, game and seafood roasted on the bone for more intense flavor. An elevated seating area creates the atmosphere of a bull-fighting arena and serves as the hallmark of his dining room.

Once only a dream of partners Linton and Gina Hopkins, **Restaurant Eugene** is now a reality. Chef Linton Hopkins showcases his devotion to the seasons through contemporary, upscale American cuisine highlighted with classical techniques. The polished and elegant décor lends way to a suave, sensual ambiance, highlighting the talents of these nationally recognized artists.

“Atlanta’s Southern hospitality really makes it unique,” Karatassos explains. “This city has such a blend of really sophisticated, creative cuisines, combined with welcoming, generous service. Plus, as the restaurant industry has grown, each restaurant has to be so unique and outstanding just to survive. It is that spirit of competitiveness that drives the quality in Atlanta over other cities.”

### **Something to satisfy every craving**

The culinary diversity in Atlanta is reflected by the fine foods, unique décor and ambiance that create an enjoyable dining experience. Succulent seafood with Greek influences can be found in Buckhead at **KYMA**, the culinary prowess of which has been featured in international publications, including Greek newspapers and magazines.

The edgy **TWO.urban licks** takes on city warehouse-meets-urban chic with a fiery American menu and the country's largest rotisserie, slow-roasting whole meats and fish by open flame. **Rolling Bones**, one of *Bon Appetit* magazine’s 50 Hottest Restaurants in the United States, serves succulent barbeque in a retro-chrome, renovated gas station.

Eastern influences and fusions reign throughout Atlanta. *Food & Wine* magazine’s Best New Asian Restaurants 2005 highlights **Com Vietnamese Grill Restaurant**, located on Atlanta’s international corridor of Buford Highway. Find exquisite sushi creations at **MF Sushi Bar**. The restaurant name honors sushi chef and co-owner Chris “Magic Fingers” Kinjo, nicknamed for the ease and grace with which he creates his celebrated cuisine. Enjoy the tastes of Thailand at **NAN**, a temple of culinary artistry that transports diners to the finest areas of the country.

“Atlanta’s restaurant industry reflects the diversity and culture so abundant in the capital of the South,” said Spurgeon Richardson, Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau (ACVB) president. “We have more than 8,000 metro-Atlanta restaurants, meaning a person could dine in a different restaurant every day for the next 22 years.”

### **Reservations recommended**

Home to many award-winning gastronomic establishments, Atlanta has carved a place among the country’s top dining destinations. In 2006, Mobil Travel Guide awarded **Park 75 at the Four Seasons Hotel Atlanta** and **Bacchanalia** each with four-star ratings. Two Atlanta restaurants are honored with the coveted five-star rating, **The Dining Room** at The Ritz-Carlton, Buckhead and **Seeger’s**. Only two other cities in the country share the status of home to two five-star restaurants. The lavish **Quinones at Bacchanalia** seats just 38 guests and consists of a prix fixe menu of eight or more courses featuring local, organic and seasonal ingredients.

*Forbes* magazine recently recognized several Atlanta restaurants in their guide to the “Best Business Restaurants.” Bacchanalia, Seeger’s and The Dining Room were included as the top places to wine and dine clients and seal a deal during an Atlanta dinner. At the top of the list for the best place to do a business lunch was **City Grill**, where at least 50 percent of customers are working while they eat, according to owner Karen Bremer.

### **Savor the city**

Atlanta’s in-town neighborhoods give dimension to the ambiance of the dining scene. The different personalities of each area influence the menus and settings to create a well-rounded dining experience.

One of Atlanta’s most prominent neighborhoods, Buckhead, is comprised of many exclusive high-rises and stately mansions. Long a younger professional’s paradise and noted as the most elite area of Atlanta, Buckhead is also an Atlanta nightspot and features some of the city’s most popular nightclubs and restaurants. Dine on sushi and hip fusion foods at the posh **Bluepointe** or pull out all the stops for that most important client at **Bone’s**, a top Atlanta steakhouse. See and be seen at **Twist**, popular with the late-dinner crowd and offering scintillating small plates and celebrity sightings.

Recognized as the heart of the arts in Atlanta, Midtown is an area known for its residential diversity combined with an energetic, young business district. Dine on internationally inspired fare at the urban bistro, **the GLOBE** or experience steak, seafood and sushi with Asian flair at the sophisticated **Silk**. Try out the hot scene at **Shout** at the rooftop lounge, complete with cabanas, while tasting tapas, wood fired pizzas and sushi. The futuristic **Piebar** is located in a renovated 1960s bank building serving pizzas with ingredients spanning the universe and inventive cocktails.

A popular spot with Atlanta’s young professionals, Virginia-Highland is noted for its 50-year-old shopping district with family-owned, one-of-a-kind restaurants and retail stores. This cozy, yet lively neighborhood is home to **Wisteria**, a low-key, refined establishment ready to soothe the soul with contemporary Southern dishes. **La Tavola Trattoria** is a

neighborhood Italian restaurant that serves simple, yet creative cuisine primarily from southern Italy. Fiery dishes and cool flavors are on the menu at **Sala Sabor de Mexico**, serving authentic Mexican cuisine with a sleek, yet neighborhood feel.

### **Atlanta al Fresco**

Outdoor dining is a favorite pastime for Atlantans and is complemented by the city's mild climate, year-round. Check out **Agave's** extensive tequila bar or homemade margaritas on a covered patio with southwestern accents. Slow things down at **Murphy's** in Virginia-Highland on the charming outdoor patio with a French- and American-influenced menu. A few miles north in the heart of Buckhead, experience outdoor dining at **Nava**, serving some of Atlanta's best contemporary southwestern cuisine.

For a leisurely pace, visit the **Horseradish Grill** near Chastain Park. Upscale Southern fare served in a rehabilitated horse stable keeps the locals coming back. The famous Chattahoochee River offers a romantic setting for riverfront dining. Situated in "the Hooch's" shady banks, **Canoe** features the culinary designs of Chef Carvel Grant Gould.

These ingredients blend together to make Atlanta an adventurous dining destination for visitors. It's time to taste Atlanta again.

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