

Buckhead's chef-driven restaurants

When it comes to "cheffy" restaurants, Buckhead can get a bad rap, what with all the chains and fast-casual eateries and corporate steakhouses that call it home. But thanks to a handful of innovative chefs,

many of whom have set up their own shops, the neighborhood is now host to several *sui generis* restaurants where tired, mass-produced dishes (did someone say crab rangoon?) have been replaced

with made-from-scratch, groundbreaking plates of local, seasonal and sustainable ingredients made with skill, ingenuity and a whole lotta love. Here are some of our favorite chef-driven restaurants in Buckhead:

Aria

THE CHEF: Gerry Klaskala

Photo: Courtesy of Aria



Why He's Awesome: Not only has Klaskala's incredibly fresh and seasonal cooking kept Aria at the top of nearly every "hot" restaurant list for more than a decade, but the chef, who is in his kitchen every single night, is also a major philanthropist in town, donating his time and talents to food-based organizations like the Atlanta Community Food Bank, American Heart Association, Georgia Organics and Share Our Strength.

Can't Miss Dishes: *Butter braised Maine lobster with black truffle potatoes; Niman Ranch slow-roasted pork belly; Zinfandel-braised beef short rib.*
www.aria-af.com

Bhojanic

THE CHEF: Archana Becker

Why She's Awesome: Buckhead isn't exactly known for its ethnic cuisine, but Punjab-born Chef Becker is changing that with her family-style Northern Indian food that employs authentic techniques in a nontraditional setting (it doesn't get more American than their strip mall location in the Shops Around Lenox).

Can't Miss Dishes: *Chicken biryani (mixed rice plate); goat curry; aloo tikki (crispy potato patties with chickpea curry and chutneys).*

www.bhojanic.com



Bhojanic's goat curry swims in a ginger, garlic and onion-based sauce.

Holeman & Finch

THE CHEF: Linton Hopkins

Why He's Awesome: Chef Hopkins was a pioneer in Atlanta's fine dining and farm-to-table landscape when he opened Restaurant Eugene 10 years



ago—today we love the whole animal cookery menu he's added at H&F, where parts like marrow bones, tongues and even testicles take center stage.

Can't Miss Dishes: *Hot chicken sandwich with kohlrabi slaw; duck liver pâté; fish collars.*

www.holeman-finch.com

Seven Lamps

THE CHEF: Drew Van Leuvan



Why He's Awesome: After training under some of the culinary world's masterminds (think Guenter Seeger and Wylie Dufresne), Van Leuvan launched Pan de Mie Pasta, a

handmade pasta company that sold to 28 of the city's top restaurants, before opening Seven Lamps. So obviously the tortellini is out of this world! And the way Van Leuvan's communal, veggie-driven menu celebrates seasonality, yet is always on the cutting edge, makes for the ultimate comfort food.

Can't Miss Dishes: *Lobster bun with celery aioli and steamed brioche; Maine mussels with smoky andouille, charred jalapeño and fennel butter; housemade charcuterie.*

www.sevenlampsatl.com

St Cecilia

THE CHEF: Craig Richards

Why He's Awesome: After working in Italian kitchens, Chef Richards returned to Atlanta to helm the kitchen at Ford Fry's latest outpost—seasonal, coastal European seafood is the name of the game and it's unlike anything else you'll find in Buckhead.

Can't Miss Dishes: *Squid ink spaghetti with lump crab and Calabrian chile; grilled whole fish with citrus; charred octopus with bean salad.*

www.stceciliaatl.com



St. Cecilia's grilled whole fish with citrus.

Umi

THE CHEF: Fuyuhiko Ito

Why He's Awesome: Chef Ito is one of the most charismatic, passionate chefs in town, which is why sitting at his razor-sharp knife skills—he carefully fine-tunes each knife (some of which cost thousands) with three different grit-sharpening stones every day.

Can't Miss Dishes: *With more than two dozen fish species behind the counter, go for the omakase menu (chef's choice). If ordering à la carte, you can't go wrong with avocado salad; miso-marinated black cod; otoro tuna with truffle oil; green tea soufflé.*

www.umiatlanta.com



Umi's spicy tuna crispy rice dish is topped with jalapeño slices.

Watershed on Peachtree

THE CHEF: Joe Truex



Why He's Awesome: The New South looks a lot more multicultural these days, nowhere more so than at the new Watershed where Le Cirque-trained

Chef Truex, previously of Repast, puts his Louisiana lilt onto every globally inspired plate.

Can't Miss Dishes: *Eggplant fries; blue crab churros; gumbo; fried chicken (only on Wednesdays); Joe's Jambalaya.*

www.watershedrestaurant.com

Woodfire Grill

THE CHEF: Matt Weinstein

Why They're Awesome: Along with Owner Nick Quinones, Chef Weinstein has created a culture rooted in sustainability, which means working closely with the best local farmers and growers to source the best product available. In fact, Weinstein's daily changing menu always has something new and exciting for diners to sink their teeth into.

Can't Miss Dishes: *Pickled shrimp with chipotle mole; cornflake-fried chicken with watermelon curry; Painted Hills ribeye with carrots and leeks.*

www.woodfiregrill.com



Woodfire Grill's GrassRoots Farms' chicken thigh with chickpea hummus, tabbouleh, cucumber, yogurt and grilled sweet gem lettuce.

Yebo

THE CHEF: Diane Anthony

Why She's Awesome: When Diane and her family came to Atlanta back in 1998, they opened the country's first South African restaurant, 10 Degrees South. Today they also run Yebo, a swanky spot tucked inside Phipps Plaza dishing up modern small plates from their homeland.

Can't Miss Dishes: *Peri-peri fried chicken; ostrich Bolognese; Bobotie Bunny Chow (ground beef curry with fried egg).*

www.yeborestaurant.com



Yebo's modern interior at Phipps Plaza.



The recently launched EatOutAtlanta app features several Buckhead restaurants.



DOWNLOAD THIS: EATOUTATLANTA

Groupon and LivingSocial might be the bee's knees for diners seeking freebies, but what about a membership for those who are more passionate about good food? Enter EatOutAtlanta, the latest foodie club and app connecting diners to chef-driven restaurants for a more memorable dining experience. Launched first in Atlanta, the program's participating restaurants include Saltyard, HAVEN, Valenza, Rumi's Kitchen, Double Zero Napoletana, Sugo, Smokebelly, Aja and Smash.

There's a catch—membership starts at \$72 (pre-register to lock in the early-adopter rate; it goes up to \$97 per year soon) and there are no coupons, discounts or freebies. But in exchange, members will receive engraved cards promising unique access, like off-menu dishes, exclusive tastings, chef's table or priority seats and special pairings. Members also have access to the EatOutAtlanta app, which displays restaurant profiles and menus, and allows members to share restaurant suggestions across the web as well as give feedback directly to the restaurant. "Other companies rely on these discounts as their own product, selling the restaurants' loss for their own gain," explains Founder and Atlanta native Kayvon Gerami. "But restaurants cannot survive like that; and worse yet, [these discount companies] train the consumer to value products at this new discounted price and only patronize the restaurant when they're offering a discount. Would you ever pay \$50 for a steak that you once got for \$20?" So instead, EatOutAtlanta focuses on value through experience, ensuring diners receive the best experience for their money rather than a decent experience for as little money as possible. Gerami says he has plans to expand the program to other cities in the near future. www.eatoutatlanta.com

NOW OPEN

Fans of the uber playful One Sushi + in Brookhaven rejoice! Owner Malli Hu (also of Ichiban Steak & Sushi) is opening her third Japanese fusion spot this month on Lenox Road in the former Truffles space. **Katana Teppanyaki & Sushi**, a sushi bar meets teppanyaki house, will dish out Hu's signature sushi rolls (think lump crab and Cajun spiced salmon with Pop Rocks) on one side of the restaurant, while communal, hibachi-esque grills chum out high-quality proteins (NY strip steak, Springer Mountain Farms chicken and Maine lobster) with golden garlic fried rice and stir-fried seasonal vegetables on the other side. Wash it all down with an innovative cocktail, like the Chamomile Cooler made with Yamazaki 12 years, fresh lemon, simple syrup and chamomile foam. Kanpai! Open for dinner seven nights a week; lunch coming soon.

Katana Teppanyaki & Sushi
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www.katanaatl.com

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