

Food for Thought

Neiman Marcus food guru Kevin Garvin **dishes** on the restaurant scene

Look beyond Buckhead for delectable cuisine in Atlanta. Inman Park is the place to be, and chef Kevin Rathbun is at the helm. Here, he talks about his signature Rathbun's and his new venture, Krog Bar

Kevin Garvin: What are the restaurants you've been responsible for since moving to Atlanta about 10 years ago?

Kevin Rathbun: When I first moved here, I started Nava, a Southwestern restaurant owned by the Buckhead Life Restaurant Group. I stepped out as their corporate chef and opened Bluepointe and then went to Chops and Atlanta Fish Market. I ran the Buckhead Diner for two years, and during that time I went to Greece to do research and development on the group's newest restaurant, Kyma.

Garvin: Now you've stepped away from the Buckhead movement and have your own restaurant in Inman Park.

Rathbun: Inman Park was the first suburb of Atlanta. Wealthy families from some of Atlanta's earliest companies, such as the Candler's of Coca-Cola, stepped out of the downtown area and into Inman Park. Over time, the area went downhill, but people are now starting to come back and rebuild.

Garvin: What would you call the type of cuisine at Rathbun's?

Rathbun: I say it's modern American. I avoid saying fusion because I try to stay within the same culture. The sea scallop Benedict on country ham grits with asparagus and spiced hollandaise is a Southern play on eggs Benedict. The duck with Thai risotto and



green curry essence stays within the same genre. It's modern with global infusion.

Garvin: We can't do an article without talking about your brother, Kent (of Abacus in Dallas and Jasper's in Plano). Is anything on this menu also on his?

Rathbun: He and I have worked together and in the same circles for some time. We've both worked for the Brennan family, and we've both worked for The American Restaurant and Rex Hale. I do this Thai rare-beef salad, which is on his menu, or was at one time. We had exchange students from Thailand live with us when we were young, and my father fell in love with this salad that they did. We would make it all the time.

Garvin: Tell us about Krog Bar.

Rathbun: Rathbun's is in the building of an old potbellied stove manufacturing company. In front of the restaurant is a little building all by itself that's only about 750 square feet. It will be a Mediterranean-style bar with cold tapas and small plates with all European- and Mediterranean-style wines. It's actually so small that the bar acts as a kitchen. Everything will be prepared in front of you. We are hoping it will take on a lot of overflow from the restaurant, but we also want it to become a destination wine bar.

Garvin: Where do you and your wife, Melissa, like to eat?

Rathbun: We try to stay at home. I cook at home a little bit. I do a lot of barbecuing. My wife's favorite restaurant is Houston's. You can find me up and down Buford Highway eating tongue tacos and Vietnamese noodle bowls.

Rathbun's is located at 112 Krog St., Ste. R, 404/524-8280, www.rathbunsrestaurant.com. Krog Bar is scheduled to open in August; visit www.krogbar.com.

Both small plates and pricier "second mortgage" plates are offered at Rathbun's, located in the building of an old stove manufacturer.