



Quick Bites – January, 2006

A listing of restaurants recently reviewed in Georgia Trend.

Atlanta

Rathbun's: Crowned by Esquire's John Mariani as one of the country's best new restaurants, chef Kevin Rathbun's elegant, hip namesake is packed with elegant, hip Morningside and Inman Park patrons. The menu reflects Rathbun's meat-centric Kansas City roots, and a resume illustrating mastery of just about every American regional cuisine. Don't be fooled by high-falutin' descriptions like "sage-rubbed pork tenderloin with white cabbage carbonara." Rathbun's dishes are readily accessible, humbly satisfying, and smartly priced. 112 Krog St. (in the Stoveworks), 404-424-8280. (Jan. '05)

Babette's Cafe: In a town defined by noisy, crowded restaurants aiming to be all things to all people, Babette's focuses on seasonal ingredients, chef/owner Marla Adams' "European farmhouse" cuisine, and an exciting, but not trendy, dining experience. It's the place to go for space between tables, a few moments between courses, and a thoughtful wine list - in short, an intown break from frenetic, big-city dining. 573 North Highland Ave., 404-523-9121. (July '05)

Baraonda: Surrounded by downtown's high-falutin' food palaces (and almost next door to the Fox Theater), Baraonda seems happy to present itself as a glorified pizza parlor. But make no mistake - despite the Italian waiters' low-key wardrobe of black T-shirts and ponytails, and the entrees that hover around the \$10 mark, Baraonda is a really good restaurant. The wood-grilled pizza, fresh salads, and clams in white wine are terrific at this neighborhood restaurant that's a handy pre-theater stop - or anytime drop-in. 710 Peachtree St. NE, 404-879-9962. (April '05)

Georgia Grille: South meets Southwest at this relaxed spot named for desert artist Georgia O'Keeffe. Neighbors and devoted regulars have kept this secret going for 15 years, but it's one worth sharing. Each familiar dish, from quesadilla to enchilada, and even "hot shots" (cornmeal-crust, cheese-stuffed jalapenos), has a fresh twist. The fresh-squeezed key lime margaritas are among the best in town. 2290 Peachtree Road, 404-352-3517. (August '05)

Soto: You'll need reservations and patience to scale Soto, a formidable Japanese ascent with plenty of handholds and a rewarding peak. Impeccable, supremely fresh sushi and sashimi, in addition to Chef Soto's traditional-minded, yet utterly original creations, such as steamed lobster with uni (sea urchin) mousse, surrounded by concentric cucumber slices so thin and delicate they look like stained glass. However, be prepared to order some cooked dishes and sake, and to enjoy your companions' company, because Soto's legendary perfectionism takes time. Prime-time meals can take hours. 3330 Piedmont Road (in the Kroger Shopping Center), 404-233-2005. (Feb. '05)

Macon

Marco: This sister restaurant to Macon's august 1842 Inn specializes in making sophisticated Italian dishes accessible. The casual atmosphere and ambiance (as well as sensible prices) offset pretty, delicious entrees such as whole fillet baked in rock salt, and grilled duck foie gras on truffled polenta. Swoonily delectable pastas, such as papardelle with shrimp and veal-stuffed spinach ravioli, are right-sized portions that leave you neither hungry nor regretful. 4581 Forsyth Road, 478-405-5660. (June '05)

Augusta

Bambu on Hickman: Perhaps it's not quite as grand as the days when the Partridge Inn fed presidents and princes, but at Bambu, a slender green shoot of tradition has resurfaced. In 2002, Chef Philippe Chin, a classically trained chef of French-Chinese ancestry, dramatically modernized the restaurant. Like its interior, the menu combines contemporary Asian flash with old-fashioned Southern comfort: Curried venison, sushi and crab cakes, stuffed trout and pad Thai. Despite a few missteps, the place is once again a dining destination. It's déjà food all over again. 2110 Walton Way (inside the Partridge Inn Hotel). 706-312-7777. (March '05)

Cartersville

D. Morgan's: Confit comes to Cartersville. This sophisticated restaurant, carved from a former furniture store downtown, seems out of place only until you go there. Sharply dressed patrons revel in chef Derek Morgan's original, uncomplicated pairings and triplings of fresh, familiar flavors: lobster bisque with porcini; seared ahi tuna with scallion hummus; cardamom doughnuts with coffee ice cream. Wines are moderately priced, and the list is full of discoveries. 28 West Main St., 770-383-3535. (Oct. '05)