

## Table Talk with Meridith Ford Goldman

### The best restaurants in Atlanta 2009: Songs of the South

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Abattoir's chicken liver and foie gras mousse/Credit: AJC

The lagging economy can't stop Atlanta's restaurants from setting a pace that's continually being recognized nationally. We have great restaurants, and we're not afraid to show it. With the entire ruckus, a brand new breed of regional cuisine has emerged. Restaurants that exude modernity while embracing what's best about Southern cooking have blossomed as examples of what's best about Atlanta dining now: farm-fresh ingredients, artisanal methods from cheese making to butchery and the love of

preserving. Plus there's always dessert, something these restaurants prove is at the top of any great Southern menu. These six restaurants exemplify what's best about Atlanta restaurants now.

## ABATTOIR \*\*\*\*

1170 Howell Mill Road, inside the White Provision complex, Atlanta, 404-892-3335

Atlanta's most lauded restaurateurs, Anne Quatrano and Clifford Harrison, have created in Abattoir a personal statement that has already become, after recently opening this past summer, a benchmark in Atlanta dining. Much has been made of the meat-centric menu, created by Quatrano and chef Joshua Hopkins. But eating here is about so much more than offal, alternative meat cuts and innards. The vegetables, whether in a crisped salad of fresh farm lettuces crowned with a poached egg and bacon or in a pickling of cabbage served from a jar, are as much a reason to crow about Abattoir as the chicken liver and foie gras mousse laced with Armagnac. Add a weathered, modern farmhouse look, an excellent cocktail list and a staff that pleases, and Abattoir may be the best reason yet to embrace your inner carnivore while eating your veggies.

## JCT KITCHEN \*\*\*\*

1198 Howell Mill Road, Atlanta. 404-355-2252

JCT Kitchen has, from the start, exemplified what's best about modern Southern cooking. Chef-owner Ford Fry adds to fresh, well-sourced ingredients classical French technique and Southern sensibilities, creating a menu that turns our timeless notion of how we cook on its ear. From his otherworldly fried chicken (part crispy, part juicy) with mac-and-cheese so rich and creamy it should have its own zip code to "angry" mussels spiced and peppered with serrano chile, bacon and a bit of onion in a broth that borders on creaminess, this kitchen offers a tasty take on all that's right about the Southern dining now. Desserts set the bar high for other offerings; rarely do I find anything to argue about with milky, sugar-and-rum sopped tres leches topped with coconut, or soft gingerbread pudding cake with tart Meyer lemon curd. Barkeep Lara Creasy adds a sexy dimension to the cocktails, too: Try her "fields of gold" with Number 209 gin, chamomile-infused vermouth, local honey, lemon juice and fennel pollen.