



## Abattoir – Atlanta, GA – November 27, 2009

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**Address:**

1170 Howell Mill Road  
Atlanta, GA 30318

**Phone Number:**

404 892 3335

**Web Site:**

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In French, the name rolls off the tongue...Abattoir. Dig deeper and you'll uncover the root of the restaurant's name: "slaughterhouse." The second story "chophouse" was once a house of horrors for pigs, but now the building is part of Atlanta's chic western design district. Abattoir belongs to well-regarded restaurateurs Anne Quatrano and Clifford Harrison, who have teamed with longtime chef de cuisine Joshua Hopkins on an ambitious, highly seasonal and comforting restaurant.

Quatrano and Harrison own Bacchanalia, Floataway Café, Quinones and Star Provisions in a fashionable plaza that's a short walk from Abattoir. They just need to take a footbridge over railroad tracks to the gleaming new White Provision complex.

The six-month old restaurant plays up its provenance, featuring a cow statue out front, an Angus diagram in a window and massive cage-like lanterns that hang from meat hooks. The space is clean and cool, with walls made from century old heart of pine that used to serve as flooring at the shuttered Goodyear plant in Cartersville.

Abattoir's menu is divided into nine categories: Snacks, Salted/Cured, Food in a Jar, Local Produce, From the Wood Grill, Offal, Plates/Bowls, Cheese, Sweet.

[editorial]



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We started with a tantalizing salad (\$9) that combined crisp greens, firm butternut squash, pulled duck confit, pickled hard-boiled egg and the topper - crispy duck skin.



Everything at Abattoir is locally sourced and handmade, an approach that elevates seemingly simple menu options like wood grilled bratwurst (\$6), a juicy, finger-length pork sausage topped with a tangy thatch of sweet onions and mustard seed.

[editorial]



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Our meal was animal-rich, so it was a nice respite to order a jar of local vegetables (\$5.50), impeccable carrots and radishes in herbaceous green goddess dressing.



Gargantuan duck meatballs (\$16) were flecked with cilantro and parsley and absolutely mouth watering, served in brodo with greens, chanterelles and micro-thin radishes that added texture.

[editorial]



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Lamb liver fritters (\$8.50) were seasoned with chives and basil. The crispy panko crust and gamy, loosely packed liver core were a nice contrast to the sweet tomato relish and tomato water, which provided enough acidity to cut the richness of a dish that was just included in Food & Wine's list of the ten best dishes of 2009



Slow cooked rabbit (\$19) was a knockout dish, with the juicy dark meat bathing in its sticky jus with crisp, bitter escarole leaves and sweet turnips that soaked up the jus like a sponge. On the side, I found a lean sausage made with the rabbit breast.

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Spicy shrimp (\$20) was spa-like by comparison, featuring a light herbaceous broth loaded with sweet shrimp, cabbage and grilled shitake mushrooms. Lemongrass was in evidence, but not enough to justify the "spicy" title.



Luis Vasquez is the pastry chef for the restaurant group and works out of nearby Star Provisions. He devised the desserts for Abbatoir, including a creamy Bruleed Carolina Gold rice pudding, served hot and plated with a cool pitcher of vanilla milk (\$8) and a dish of concentrated sous vide cherries.



Maple bacon beignets (\$8) were more like doughnuts, since they weren't as airy as New Orleans style beignets. Our three rings and three holes were drizzled with caramel sauce, showered with crispy bacon bits and sprinkled with sugar. The flavors were good, but the "beignets" were just a little too cakey.

Abattoir was a highlight from our eating tour of Atlanta. Maybe it was the elemental connection to the fresh-killed animals that added something to our experience, but it was probably the locally sourced ingredients and deft cooking from Chef Hopkins and his crew.

[editorial]



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