

# RESTAURANTS

**WATERSHED** 406 West Ponce de Leon Ave., Decatur, 404-378-4900. Indigo Girl Emily Saliers, her partners and their chef work seamlessly to provide a spellbinding experience. Chef Scott Peacock, whose reputation of "King of Southern Cuisine" and champion of the organic movement have preceded him by a mile, does far more than offer the best fried chicken, the lightest biscuits and the finest old-timey chocolate cake. The restaurant is a refined showcase for anything from awesome gourmet sandwiches to fresh pasta, whole roasted fish and the most sensible and dedicated brunch in the city. All of this and more, including retail wine, fits into a handsomely renovated former garage. \$\$\$

**ZYKA** 1677 Scott Blvd., Decatur, 404-728-4444. The bizarre environment notwithstanding (the restaurant is located in a former church building and looks somewhat like a rec room), this is one of the spiciest and most memorable Indian eateries in a city where we have plenty to choose from. Authentic cuisine from Hyderabad is meat-friendly and complex, producing a wide range of curries and chicken dishes dyed a characteristic red. Styrofoam plates and limited service should not deter you, and you'll even love desserts such as the saffron-scented ice cream served in clay flower pots. \$

## DOWNTOWN/ SOUTH METRO AREA

(Includes College Park, East Point)

**LUXE** 89 Park Place, 404-389-0800. Luxury isn't the first word that springs to mind in this cool-sophisticated, somewhat severe Art Deco dining room, where young chef Patti Roth cooks her heart out to create a true dining destination in oft-deserted downtown Atlanta. From potato croquettes with serrano ham and manchego cheese to chocolate tart topped with toasted marshmallows and caramelized banana, the restaurant makes a good case for the compatibility of Modern American and Mediterranean flavors. \$\$\$

**OSCAR'S** 3725 Main St., College Park, 404-766-9688. Imagine whisking someone special to or from the airport and treating them to a sophisticated meal in this suave and important restaurant. The style, closer to fine dining than most contemporary American bistros, is definitely a first for the Southside, where Sardinian flatbread with Italian cured meat and truffle oil and pear salad with Gorgonzola have been eye openers. The location on Main Street is an American idyll, and the dining room is a looker. \$\$\$

**RIA'S BLUEBIRD** 421 Memorial Drive, 404-521-3737. Cabbagetown and Grant Park meet in this tastefully funky diner with a great view of Oakland Cemetery. Breakfast standards and, at lunch, ingenious sandwiches show a fairly modern awareness. The bluebird of happiness lives in a great mosaic inserted in the wooden wall of the dining room, and a delicious hidden patio can be the perfect place for an early tête à tête over eggs and biscuits. \$

## OBJECTS OF DESIRE

# A TALE OF TWO CHEESECAKES

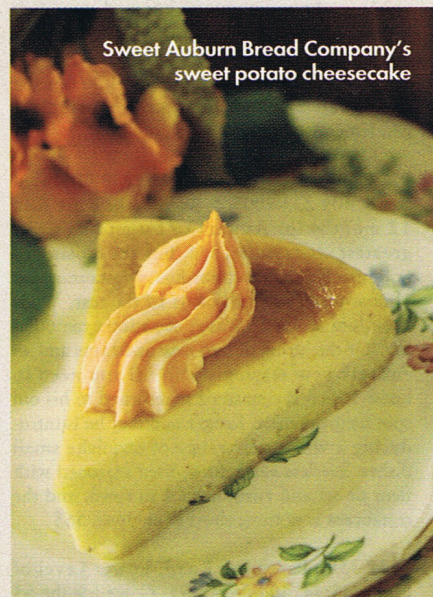
It's a perfect marriage of two heavenly concoctions—sweet potato pie and cheesecake—and **sweet potato cheesecake** tastes as scrumptious as it sounds. Two local bakeries offer distinct takes on this dessert that's perfect for holiday indulgence.

**Sweet Auburn Bread Company's** owner and executive pastry chef, Sonya Jones, has received national and international acclaim for her version since 1999, when then-President Bill Clinton stopped by her store in the Sweet Auburn Curb Market to sample her creamy creation. With a smooth, almost custard-like consistency, Jones' version is a delicate combination of traditional cheesecake with fresh sweet potatoes piled atop a rich, pound cake crust.

Jones has since moved her bakery to another location, but her fans continue to drop by the Curb Market in search of a sugary fix. When they do, they're greeted by the "SWEET POTATO CHEESECAKES SOLD HERE" sign, which is now posted atop the display case at the **International Bakery** (located in Jones' old space). This version features more distinct, separate layers of cheesecake—with a hint of lemon—and sweet potatoes with a butter-layer cake crust. It's capped off with a tart, sour-cream topping reminiscent of Key lime pie. "People always ask me if I'm the same lady who President Clinton visited," explains owner Linda Davis, who created the recipe. "It's a different cheesecake and a different woman."

Both versions, however distinct from one another, do share one quality: the sinful indulgence that only cheesecake provides. But who's watching waistlines this month? That's what January's New Year's resolutions are for. —C.T.

**[Sweet Auburn Bread Company, (at press time, the bakery was moving; check sweet-auburnbread.com for new address), 404-696-5676; International Bakery, 209 Edgewood Ave., 404-522-2474]**



**ROLLING BONES PREMIUM PIT BBQ** 377 Edgewood Ave., 404-222-2324. There is nothing rustic about this gorgeously renovated Art Deco gas station in the Martin Luther King Jr. Historic District. The owners are pretty savvy, too, and their concept, imported from Texas by way of St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands, has unusual flair. The custom-designed equipment has been put to good use, especially when it comes to the pit-grilled chicken and the beef brisket. The ribs and the chopped pork are less distinctive, but everything tastes good dipped into (rather than slathered with) a thin, spicy sauce resembling a jerk marinade. \$

**THUMBS UP** 573 Edgewood Ave., 404-223-0690. History does repeat itself! This upwardly mobile, groovy diner started in Decatur, relocated to a happening 'hood and has already doubled in size. But you still may have to wait for a

breakfast of fluffy eggs, stone-ground grits and delicious oversized pancakes. The short order cooks are some of the best in the city. The Heap—a mound of seasoned spuds topped with cheese and two eggs—works nicely as lunch, as does the hefty black bean burrito. \$

## INTOWN

(Includes East Atlanta, Cheshire Bridge, Midtown, Morningside, Virginia-Highland, Westside)

**ATMOSPHERE** 1620 Piedmont Ave., 678-702-1620. Despite the name, the food is more distinctive than the ambience in this relatively ambitious French restaurant located near Ansley Mall in a cottage with a charming terrace. Much stronger than when it opened, the kitchen does wonderfully correct versions of bistro classics such as duck confit over potatoes