

# THE ENTH DEGREE

## DESTINATION: Atlanta

Rhett Butler may not have given a damn, but this Georgian city offers food, culture and wine in abundance.



**A**tlanta hasn't had a reputation for fine dining. Peaches, Chick-fil-A and Coca-Cola, sure. Plenty of collar greens and biscuits. Until Richard Blais walked on the "Top Chef" stage, few outside of the Southeast thought of Atlanta as any kind of culinary capital. But "Hotlanta" has an increasingly hot, diverse and sophisticated food scene. These eats will help make that likely delay at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport worth the frustration.

If you have just one night in the city, choose Midtown's **Dogwood** (565 Peachtree Street; [dogwoodrestaurant.com](http://dogwoodrestaurant.com)). Opened by Georgia native Shane Touhy in August 2008, Dogwood is one of the rare modern Southern restaurants in the country that manages to make its traditional menu creative without being over the top. Touhy's business partner Scott Black is a trained sommelier, and together they developed a wine list that pairs well with fried chicken, greens and their signature grits bar offerings.

His recommendations vary depending on the grit and the topping (try the short ribs or the fried green tomato, \$4-\$6), but in general Touhy likes wines with citrus tones, such as a Sauvignon Blanc, to go with the buttery grits.

Also opened in 2008, **Parish Restaurant** (240 North Highland Avenue; [parishatl.com](http://parishatl.com)) takes a new look at Southern food, but through a different lens. Housed in an old forgery, Parish's New Orleans-inspired Creole and Cajun menu includes a shrimp burger plus the entire collection of New Orleans' Abita Brew, not to mention dishes showcasing a different Georgia farmer weekly. (Parish Market and Parish To Go offer po' boys and other fast food if you don't have time for a sit-down meal.)

If you're looking for a *Mad Men* vibe, saddle up to the **Livingston Restaurant + Bar** (659 Peachtree St., NE; [livingstonatlanta.com](http://livingstonatlanta.com)), and order the "three -martini lunch." But no worries: you won't be three sheets to the wind. The lunch is your choice of a trio of small portions of the restaurant's best dishes served in three sleek martini glasses. This contemporary hideaway is con-



Circle: The Atlanta skyline emphasizes the city's urban energy. Top to bottom: Creative cocktails and Italian steakhouse fare is the draw of Pacci Ristorante + Alto Rex; servers pour the perfect Coke at Holeman & Finch Public House; at Dogwood, wine-friendly Southern specialties find new life.

nected to the gorgeous 19th-century Georgian Terrace, a hotel best known for hosting the premiere of *Gone with the Wind* in 1939. If you get swept away by the story, the **Margaret Mitchell House** ([margaretmitchellhouse.com](http://margaretmitchellhouse.com)), once home to the *GWTTW* author, is nearby.

Even Atlanta's non-Southern fare can impress a dyed-in-the-wool northerner like Martha Stewart. That's the case with the Asian-influenced cuisine **Repast** (620 North Glen Iris Drive; [repastrestaurant.com](http://repastrestaurant.com)). Chef Joe Truex (part of the husband-wife team with Mihoko Obunai-Truex) created a sexy, hip restaurant that is also perfect as a nightcap stop. Try the pineapple-infused bourbon or the \$10 mission fig martini made with a fig wine reduction.

**Pacci Ristorante + Alto Rex** (866 West Peachtree Street, NW; [pacciatlanta.com](http://pacciatlanta.com)) are inside the new Hotel Palomar Atlanta Midtown (or, in the case of the rooftop Alto Rex, on top of), but the reasonably priced specials and interesting after-work cocktails attract plenty of locals. Check out the ample Italian steakhouse menu, the Four 'n Pour wine dinners (four courses from Chef Keira Moritz paired with four wines for \$35) and the view.

Your trip to Atlanta won't be complete without an ice-cold Coca-Cola. Get yours at **Holeman & Finch Public House** (2277 Peachtree Rd NE; [holeman-finch.com](http://holeman-finch.com)) which boasts the "perfect" 38-degree, customized Coke.

Finally, for something completely different (really, completely different) try the vegan- and vegetarian-friendly **R. Thomas Deluxe Grill** (812 Peachtree Street NW) in Buckhead. This 24-hour diner has macrobiotic food on a menu diverse enough to appease carnivores. But more unusual than that are the birds, in cages both inside and outside the restaurant. So far, none have been heard to suggest wine pairings with the quinoa plate.

—MARGARET LITTMAN

PHOTOS: CIRCLE: MARK WILLIAM PENNY/SHUTTERSTOCK; TOP: CLAY MILLER; BOTTOM: LAUREN RUBINSTEIN