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## Zaza Pachulia becoming Atlanta restaurateur

ATLANTA - Not every athlete is like, say, Shaq, where the fans' perception of his on-court persona is pretty much in line with how gets down off the court. Sometimes, we get it all wrong, like with Zaza Pachulia.



Zaza Pachulia and his partners opened the restaurant-lounge Buckhead Bottle Bar outside Atlanta.

Zaza is a power forward/center for the Atlanta Hawks. Most fans know him as a goon. Why? Because his proper introduction was in the 2007 playoffs when Zaza -- a hulking, kinda scary looking dude -- [had to be separated from putting a whoopin' on Kevin Garnett](#). When they briefly went nose-to-nose, there seemed to be a distinct possibility that Zaza was going to crack KG's skull open with a headbutt.

The thing is, he's not that dude. There's a level of sophistication to Zaza that most NBA fans probably aren't aware of. And now Zaza is turning into one Atlanta's premier restaurateurs.

Based on his rep, you might expect a typical sports bar, but that's not Zaza. Zaza does chic. So, within the past year, he's teamed up with co-owner A.D. Allushi and chef Ian Winslade of ADI Restaurant Concepts to open the French-style bistro 5th Street Café in midtown Atlanta and the sleek restaurant-lounge Buckhead Bottle Bar. Didn't think Zaza was a white-linen dude, did you?

London-transplant Winslade, who said folks don't know how much of an "intelligent chap" Zaza is, gives the big man a lot of credit for both restaurants' vibes.

"During my days playing in Turkey, traveling Europe, I fell in love with dining," Zaza said, "especially outdoor dining. The cafes in Spain or the French bistros."

And he didn't just bull into these ventures like some dumb jockey looking to own "a spot." Zaza bought Eno (a Mediterranean eatery that was one of his favorites) about a year ago and renamed it Eno by Zaza, but he and his partners noticed the lack of outdoor dining so they switched it up and re-opened it as 5th Street Café. Zaza says he wanted to open Buckhead Bottle Bar because most of the bars closed their

kitchens early.

The dude ain't dense.

Players have caught on. Jamal Crawford (who owns the more typical sports bar SPORT in his hometown Seattle) said 5th Street is his "favorite spot" in town. Visiting players -- even the ones that come through the lane and catch a Zaza forearm shiver -- visit the spots when they're in town, too. Crawford recalls seeing "all the Knicks" at 5th Street (albeit back when it was Eno by Zaza). "Players really like the vibe," he said.

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