

SUNDAY, AUGUST 01, 2010 | FOOD, IN THIS ISSUE..., WINE, BEER &amp; SPIRITS, REVIEWS, ATLANTA

## SP Bottled up



### Buckhead Bottle Bar a best bet for new neighborhood joint

By H.M. Cauley

Anyone who has followed Atlanta's cuisine scene for some time will know exactly where Buckhead Bottle Bar is located. The white building at the intersection of East Paces Ferry and Bolling Way has had various culinary lives through the years, but is perhaps most fondly remembered as

the Peachtree Cafe, a popular spot where locals lingered over lunch and dinner on the patio and upstairs deck. Less memorable incarnations included Che Tapas and Blais, one of the first solo ventures by now celeb chef and Flip owner Richard Blais.

But that's ancient history for local restaurant veterans A.D. Allushi and Ian Winslade of Market, Thrive and Spice Market, and their partner, Atlanta Hawks star Zaza Pachulia. They saw the empty space as the perfect place for a restaurant resurrection.

"It was sad to see this building sitting here, dilapidated," says Winslade.

It's evident from the sleek interior that considerable expense and attention to detail went into the design. It starts on the windows, where boxes were created to hold real, frosted wine bottles that refract the light into various nooks

throughout the day. Tufted, avocado-colored walls surround pub tables and banquettes with back-lit tables. There are multiple bars, one unobtrusively in the corner of the dining room, one for each outdoor area and another in a separate space designed exclusively for mingling. The street-level and upstairs patios are in place as well.

Even though Bottle Bar has the polished trappings diners expect in a Buckhead restaurant, its menu has no pretensions. The most expensive item is a \$19 strip steak, but most selections are priced in the low teens.

"It's a warm neighborhood place where you can have great salads and good bar food," says Allushi. Winslade talks about the menu with many of the same descriptive adjectives Allushi uses for the decor: warm, casual, down-to-earth, simple.

"I wanted to have fun with simple food, and at the same time, have a menu that was right for the times," says Winslade. "This is a place where people can come to often, not just a destination restaurant. So we do things with a twist: The sushi rice cake comes with garlic and shrimp; the lamb burgers have lots of Moroccan spices."

PHOTOS/LIZ BARCLAY

#### Buckhead Bottle Bar

268 E. Paces Ferry Road

404-474-9892

[www.buckheadbottlebar.com](http://www.buckheadbottlebar.com)

**Hours:** Mon.-Fri. 11 a.m.-1 a.m.; Sat. 5 p.m.-2 a.m.; Sun. 11 a.m.-10 p.m.

**Reservations:** Yes

**Dress:** Casual

**Cost:** Entrees, \$14-\$19; soups, salads, sandwiches, \$5-\$12; desserts, \$4-\$6.

**Alcohol:** \$5-\$10

**Parking:** Tight on the surrounding surface streets, but there's also complimentary valet.

Other items Winslade is proud of are the crab fritters, made with a creamy brie and drizzled with a roasted pecan sauce and shaved green apple; oyster shooters with lemon grass; and the peanut butter milkshake.

Additional dishes are classics of casual fare: beef and veggie burgers; chicken, fish and barbecued pork sandwiches; and chicken tenders. "Bigger bites," as they're listed, include garlic shrimp, goat cheese gnocci, pasta topped with a veal ragu and roasted chicken. Sunday brunch brings the addition of huevos rancheros, eggs Benedict and chocolate croissants.

There's no doubt Bottle Bar has breathed new life into an old property, but will Allushi and Winslade devotees make it their new neighborhood Cheers? The partners are betting they will.

"We grew up, professionally, in Buckhead," says Allushi. "When we went downtown [to Thrive], people said we might as well have gone to Alabama. They came one time. We wanted to be back where our customers are." **SP**