

CHOICE TABLES

## Atlanta Serves Sophisticated Southern

Miller Union has the confidence of a good-looking high school student with a really generous personality: a charming, polished beacon on the Westside, a part of Atlanta that has transformed itself from an industrial other-side-of-the-tracks wasteland to the place to open a restaurant.

### Atlanta Travel Guide

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Rich Addicks for The New York Times

Miller Union is in the Westside, which has become the place to open a restaurant in Atlanta.

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Rich Addicks for The New York Times

Relaxing at Empire State South's bocce court before dinner.

Steven Satterfield, the chef, and Neal McCarthy, the manager, are running a restaurant that has gotten more attention in the last year or so than any other in the city. Martha Stewart [loves it](#) (she hosted Mr. Satterfield on her show). The major food magazines [love it](#) (Food & Wine included it in a Southern cooking roundup). The publicity machine behind it is good — so good that the buzz sometimes seems to work against it. People say it's overrated, too simple, too, well, popular.

But the people behind the restaurant don't care about all that, and neither should you. They just love what they do and the food is often exactly what I want to eat.

Mr. Satterfield, a Georgia native who spent time cooking at [Watershed](#), a much-loved restaurant where Mr. Peacock was the chef, is driven by vegetables, herbs and the purity of the plate. Things should taste the way they do when they come from the ground (or the pig or the chicken, for that matter). As he sees it, his job to coax the flavors along.

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[editorial]



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A feta snack — essentially buttery, salty cheese and crunchy vegetables — hits almost every table. But the Southern pantry also gets infused into plenty of dishes. Pickled vegetables are regulars. Delightful little fritters made from grits and country ham are made creamy with local raw-milk tomme cheese. Sorghum sweetens pork belly.

The most discussed dish might be his egg baked in celery cream. People argue that it's too subtle — but I dare you to resist dipping corners of grilled bread into the rich fondue that results when the yolk is broken.

A couple of pieces of chicken pan-seared to a perfect crispness arrive with whichever vegetables came through the back door — on a recent visit, spring peas and Vidalia onions. It's pure. It's simple. It's delicious.

You can make even better use of those vegetables with a Southern vegetable plate that seems always to feature some kind of braised greens. It's a dish that will only get better as the growing season progresses.

Desserts come to table like dear friends. Lauren Raymond, the pastry chef, puts out crisps and simple fruit dishes and puddings. The [ice cream](#), which at lunch gets turned into fantastic sandwiches with flavors like Almond Joy, is worth a scoop.

*Miller Union, 999 Brady Avenue NW, Atlanta; (678) 733-8550; [millerunion.com](http://millerunion.com). An average meal for two is about \$75.*