

By Jennifer Bradley Franklin



Photos by Sara Hanna Photography - www.sarahanna.com

**B**uckhead has a new place to nosh on pizza and it's redefining the term "fast casual." Fuoco di Napoli, situated on the little stretch of Pharr Road to the west of Peachtree, is carving out a place among Atlanta's pizza connoisseurs.

Enrico Liberato seemed destined to be a pizza master. Growing up poor in Naples, Italy, he started making pies with his grandparents, since it was the ideal cheap food. A bag of flour, yeast and salt could be transformed into a delicious canvas for cheese and tomatoes. Plus, what kid doesn't enjoy playing with dough? He was hooked, saying, "It started as play and the passion grew from there."

As a teenager, he went to pizzerias with his father. The pair ordered a pizza, just for the opportunity to peer into the kitchen and watch the chefs put on a show. After working in kitchens all over Italy and obtaining a degree from Associazione Pizzaiuoli Napoletani, Liberato came to Atlanta, landing in the kitchen of Inman Park's Fritti. From there, he did the pizza tour of Atlanta, including stints at famed Antico Pizza Napoletana and Max's Coal Oven Pizzeria. Knowing he wanted a place of his

own, Liberato built Fuoco di Napoli's wood-burning brick oven by hand, laying each of the 1,268 bricks.

Opened in late 2011, Fuoco di Napoli's menu is simple—a couple of salads and a handful of really well prepared pizzas with toppings imported from Italy: prosciutto from Parma, bufala mozzarella from Campania and San Marzano tomatoes. Since the restaurant doesn't have a liquor license, guests are invited to bring their own wine or beer to accompany the meal, a nice option for eating out on the cheap. Liberato's passion for his craft is evident. "I do this job because it's my life," he says in his charming Italian accent. "I love it."

Perhaps the best part about a visit to Fuoco di Napoli is the speed at which the pizza reaches your table—a margherita pizza only spends about 55 seconds cooking in the red- and white-oak wood-burning oven. It brings a whole new (read: delicious!) meaning to "fast casual."

**FUOCO DI NAPOLI**  
30 Pharr Road N.W.  
Atlanta 30305  
404.781.0707  
www.fuocodinapoli.com

### Up a Hill ▶

The underground supper club craze is going brick and mortar with the Buckhead opening of Cardamom Hill, an extension of Asha Gomez's popular Spice Route Supper Club. Like the under-the-radar dinner parties, the permanent location features interpretations of the cuisine of her homeland, India's Kerala region. Don't be fooled because this isn't "typical" Indian fare. Gomez leverages locally seasonal ingredients to go beyond standard curries and vindaloes. One standout is the delicately crispy Kerala-style fried chicken—the perfect marriage of Gomez's roots and her current home.

Another way the restaurant sets itself apart? The cocktail list. "Kerala is an incredibly verdant and tropical place," Gomez says. "Many of Cardamom Hill's handcrafted cocktails have a fruit forward and aromatic component that also complements and highlights the spice and herb flavors found in our cuisine." Here, mixologist Brian Stanger shares a yet-to-be-named signature cocktail for you to enjoy at home.

2 ounces Beehive gin  
1/4 ounce lime juice  
1 ounce soursop juice\*  
1/2 ounce orange  
1/2 ounce apricot brandy  
1/2 ounce Lillet  
2 dashes Bitterman's Tiki Bitters

Combine all ingredients. Shake with fresh ice and strain into a Collins glass. Zest a lime on top and enjoy.  
\*Soursop is an acidic tropical fruit, typically available in international markets.

**Cardamom Hill**  
1700 Northside Drive N.W.  
Atlanta 30318  
404.549.7012  
www.cardamomhill.net

### Through the Paces

It's been ages since a new restaurant opened on West Paces Ferry Road, so the foodie community is abuzz over STG Trattoria, the first Buckhead outpost from the masterminds behind the Westside's popular Bocado. The restaurant, which should open right about the time this issue hits the stands (early March), will feature the culinary stylings of Executive Chef Joshua Hopkins, formerly of Abattoir.

Owner Brian Lewis, whose sons Sebastian, Tristan and Gabriel inspired the restaurant's name, told us he scouted the perfect location for some time. Pizza will be the star of the menu with artisan pasta dishes playing a supporting role. Lewis doesn't care to speculate on what will become the signature dish of STG Trattoria, much like the cult-favorite hamburger at Bocado. "We'll just put our best food forward," he says. "Ultimately, our guests will be the ones who decide." For those who appreciate a great adult



Photos by Chris Homaday

beverage to go with their carb-loading, look for a wine list curated by John Passman of Cellar 13 wine shop.

**STG Trattoria**  
102 West Paces Ferry Road  
Atlanta 30305  
www.stgtrattoria.com

### "Newk" to Town ▶

Town Brookhaven has a fresh new restaurant in its ranks. Newk's Express Café, owned by locals Randi and Jay Medley, is serving up large portions of freshly tossed salads, California-style pizzas (with locally grown toppings when possible), oven-baked sandwiches and scratch-made cakes, all at reasonable prices (\$7 to \$9 for entrees). Nothing is pre-made, right down to the salad dressings, which are prepared in-house each morning. So, even if you don't have time to do the cooking yourself, you can still enjoy the benefit of a truly home-cooked meal.

**Newk's Express Café**  
305 Brookhaven Avenue  
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www.newkscafe.com

