

» DINING

Q&A: Chef Joshua Hopkins

Chef Joshua Hopkins leads the kitchen at Abattoir, one of several restaurants operated by renowned Atlanta restaurateurs Anne Quatrano and Clifford Harrison. Previously chef de cuisine at Bacchanalia (another of their restaurants), Hopkins learned his culinary skills during a series of apprenticeships in Atlanta and Charleston, S.C. A proponent of Southern cuisine complemented by French cooking techniques, Hopkins credits his mother with fostering his love of food. Where Atlanta recently chatted with this rising star, who was recently named one of the country's "four chefs to watch" by Esquire magazine.

Abattoir features "whole animal cuisine," which uses every functional piece of the animal. What animal parts aren't used?

I don't eat eyeballs—that's just a thing with me. Some people do, but I don't know many customers who'd do it.

What animal parts are the most difficult to sell?

Once you get into larger animals' livers it's a harder to sell because they have more pronounced flavor. But when it comes to kidneys, hearts, tongues, sweetbreads and so on, it just depends on individuals and whether they have strong stomachs or are squeamish and can't get past a mental image. Our service staff is pretty good at getting people to try things.

Should vegetarians just stay away from Abattoir?

No, we have so many veggie options! We spend a lot of time and a good bit of money on vegetables. We deal with a lot of farmers and source as much local as possible.



Top: Chef Joshua Hopkins
Above: Cod, pork and trip stew



What's your approach to cooking?

Slow and thoughtful. Just think about it and invest time. I read a lot. I try to get everybody in the kitchen involved.

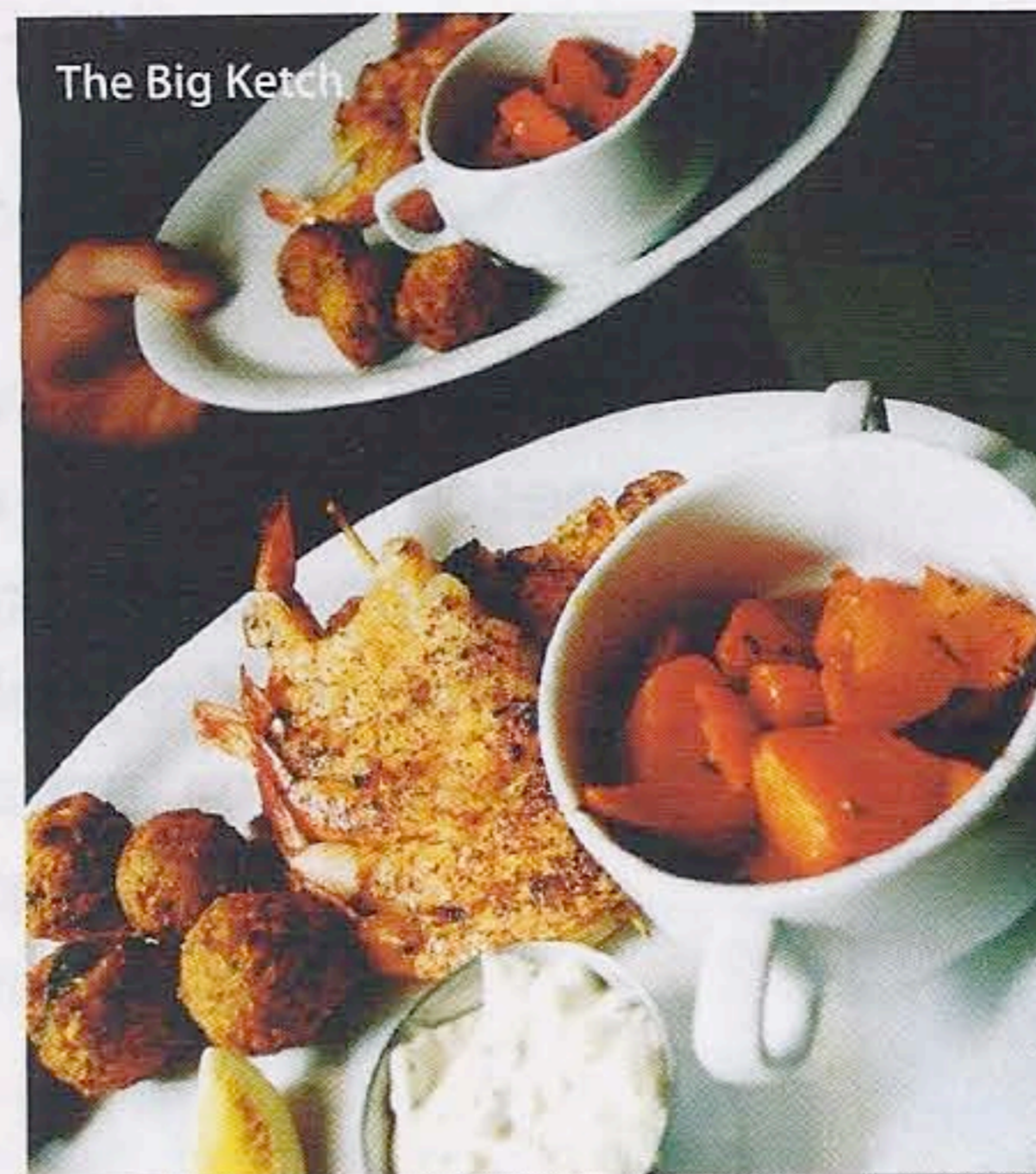
What's your favorite thing to cook?

That's a hard one. I tend to go towards cuts of meat that are fatty. I love Asian noodles. Any part of a pig. I like rabbits a lot: they're small so you have to be precise with them and if you're not paying attention they will dry up quick. I like Nantucket bay scallops a lot—they're so good you can eat them raw while you're cooking them. And bacon because the end result is so awesome.

What's your take on the Atlanta dining scene?

I think Atlanta is coming into its own as a city for not as expensive, good casual fare.

Abattoir: 1170 Howell Mill Rd. NW, Westside, 404-892-3335, www.starprovisions.com



New on the Scene

H. HARPER STATION Inspired by speakeasies and Southern diners, Chef Duane Nutter, mixologist Jerry Slater and Chef Reggie Washington created H. Harper Station, an upscale "modern watering stop." Conceived as the place where they wanted to hang out on their days off, it's housed in the historic Atlanta & West Point rail depot and has a welcoming vibe. The extensive beverage menu features more than 40 cocktails and punch bowls, 16 craft beers and 30 sustainably grown wines by the glass. Among the tempting menu offerings is a tender bison short rib paired with divine black-eyed peas, grits with crab so tasty you won't want to share a bite, and lamb sausage atop curry applesauce and fennel potato salad that will leave your taste buds tingling. 904 Memorial Dr., 678-732-0415, www.hharperstation.com.

THE BIG KETCH SALTWATER GRILL

Atlanta may lack a beach, but with the opening of The Big Ketch Saltwater Grill, it's now home to an upscale beach shack where the fish is fresh, the drinks cold and the vibe laid-back. "It's all about first and foremost the quality and freshness of the fish," says Executive Chef Bob McDonough, who has whole fish delivered daily and filets them on site to ensure maximum freshness. The menu reels in East Coast seafood favorites like shrimp and grits, lobster rolls, grouper sandwiches, blackened scallops, and oysters on the half shell (plus chicken, beef and veggie options for fish-phobic folks). "Seafood is my favorite type of food to cook," says McDonough, a graduate of Le Cordon Bleu. To protect ocean health, fish is sourced through the Clean Fish Alliance—proof that what tastes good can be good for you and the earth. 3279 Roswell Rd., 404-474-9508, www.thebigketch.com. —HSP

SAVORY SOUPS

Soup satisfies the taste buds and the soul like nothing else. Here, 4 scrumptious creations:

Beer Cheese: Rich, creamy and fortified with Sam Adams, this signature soup remains in high demand year-round. 57th Fighter Group Restaurant: 3829 Clairmont Rd., 770-234-0057, www.the57threstaurant.com

Chicken and Coconut Milk: A perfect marriage of sweet and spicy, comfort and adventure served in style. Spice Market: 188 14th St. NE, 404-724-2550, www.spicemarketatlanta.com

Fisherman's Stew: Fresh bites of scallops, shrimp and whitefish in a spicy tomato broth. Wahoo! Grill: 1042 W. College Ave., 404-373-3331, www.wahoogrilldecatur.com

Parsnip Bisque: This blend of parsnips, truffle oil, roots and cream is smooth, hearty and addictive. Alon's: 1394 N. Highland Ave., 404-872-6000, www.alons.com

