

A Vegetarian Feast

GUNSHOW'S CHRIS MCCORD MAKES HIS DEBUT WITH AN INGREDIENT-RICH FEAST SUPPORTING GEORGIA ORGANICS.

Written by Lia Picard

If there's anything that can lure locavore Atlantans out of their warm abodes on a blustery January evening, it's a locally sourced private dinner at Ormewood Park's Gunshow. The dinner served a dual purpose: to introduce Chris McCord as the new chef de cuisine of Gunshow and to raise funds for Georgia Organics through its new initiative, the Cast Iron and Collards Society (CI & CS). The five-course dinner was a collaborative effort of Chef Kevin Gillespie, outgoing Executive Chef Joey Ward, Pastry Chef Billy Cole and McCord. The menu was paired with cocktails crafted by Mercedes O'Brien, cocktail director at Gunshow, and wines chosen by Sarah Pierre of 3 Parks Wine.



Chef Kevin Gillespie tells eager diners about the meal ahead and introduces the chefs and farmer.



Sarah Pierre, owner of 3 Parks Wine, curated pairings for the evening.



The dinner benefited Georgia Organics and served as a way to announce Chris McCord's (pictured here) promotion to chef de cuisine.

PHOTOS BY JODI CASH



Farmer Cass Fraunfelder of Finch Creek Farm speaks about the symbiotic relationship between farmers and chefs.

Most of the produce for the evening was sourced from Finch Creek Farm, operated by Cass Fraunfelder. Dressed in overalls and a plaid shirt, Fraunfelder spoke to the group about his relationship with chefs. “These guys have made my life a lot easier. I think I have made theirs easier, too. I focus on what they want and grow what they need,” he says.

The CI & CS was launched by Georgia Organics in November. For the uninitiated, Georgia Organics is a member-supported nonprofit that provides outreach and support to Georgia farmers. The CI & CS was created as a way to engage food enthusiasts beyond farmers and industry workers in Atlanta. For a nominal monthly fee, members are given access to private events and kept in the loop about local industry news. Part of the membership fee helps fund Georgia Organics’ Farmer Services department while the rest supports the good food movement and operational costs.

Gillespie has a penchant for meat—as his cookbook, *Pure Pork Awesomeness*, can attest—so it was a delightful surprise to see that the evening’s menu was entirely vegetarian. In true Gunshow form, there was nothing straightforward about this vegetarian meal. Each dish was presented with pizzazz and was amazingly flavorful.



(above) The Georgia Organics team welcomes guests to its second Cast Iron & Collards Society event; (left) Chef Joey Ward tops the savory carrot cake with whipped feta.



(right) What appears to be a satsuma is actually a truffle filled with sweet potato puree, jalapeño and lime.



Dinner started with an amuse-bouche created by Ward. The dish was a truffle cleverly disguised as a satsuma (a variety of citrus fruit). Meant to be eaten in a single bite, it was filled with sweet potato puree, jalapeños and pop rock candy. An explosion of flavor with sweet and spicy coming together at once, was followed by the tingling sensation of the candies. Pierre chose an R. Dumont & Fils brut Champagne to pair with the bite. The crisp and fruity sipper had a hint of citrus and mingled nicely with the dish's spices.



Ward's ingenuity continued with a savory carrot cake made with house-fermented carrots. It was topped with a frosting resembling cream cheese that was actually whipped feta from nearby Decimal Place Farms. Carrot puree on the plate added a vibrant dash of color and sweetness. The cake was fluffy and warming, thanks to Moroccan spices, and paired perfectly with O'Brien's citrusy-spicy concoction of quinquina (an aperitif wine) mixed with za'atar, molasses, saffron, grapefruit and sumac.

(above) The chefs buzzed about all evening in the open kitchen prepping dishes for guests.



PHOTOS BY JODI CASH

A unique take on flan, Gunshow made theirs with collard greens, giving the dish an earthy and velvety quality.



Guests feel the community spirit over wine and cocktail pairings by Sarah Pierre of 3 Parks Wine and Mercedes O'Brien of Gunshow.

Flan is usually presented as a creme caramel dessert, but in this meal, it served as the cheeky third course by McCord. In this instance, diners noshed on a collard greens flan (a nice hat tip to CI & CS). The dish offered mousse-like texture with a velvety mouthfeel and an earthy profile thanks to the pumpkin miso sauce. Crisped collard leaves and Parmesan-collard chips adorning the dish added nice crunch. It was paired with Movia Rebula, orange wine with lovely notes of apple and oak.

The star of the show was Gillespie's dish, a turnip tikka masala. Gillespie shared his love of turnips and winter veggies with the crowd. "This is our ode to the British-style curry house," says Gillespie, who noted he made a curry by processing the turnips and coconut milk. The sauce was served over a piece of grilled paneer (a mild, non-melting Indian cheese), a brilliant stand-in for meat. A turnip pakora, or fritter, topped with a cooling, house-made coconut raita played sidekick to the inventive plate. Not one to shy away from bold flavors, Gillespie's dish packed just the right amount of heat that stayed on the tongue after the bite was gone. Pierre expertly paired it with a Celine et Nicolas Beaujolais made with 100 percent gamay grapes. The wine was a rich red with a touch of spice, acid, and, as Pierre says, "nice tannins that make you feel like you're still drinking a solid, elegant red."

Concluding the evening was a simple, yet sweet, beet tart prepared by Cole. Beets, sliced paper thin, sat atop a tart. Adjacent to the tart was a sumac-spiced white chocolate ganache that added a touch of sweetness to the otherwise earthy beets. It was paired with Orleans Borbon Manzanilla sherry that was flecked with notes of vanilla and lemon.

While the evening's dishes may have given a nod to international cuisine, there was no doubt that the night was a true celebration of what our local farms can produce and a reminder that our farmers are worth treasuring.



Gillespie's dish was big in flavor: turnip tikka masala with grilled paneer and a turnip pakora with coconut raita.

Local Turnip Curry

Recipe by Kevin Gillespie, Chef, Gunshow

Yield: 6 servings

- 3 white turnips, about the size of golf balls, peeled and quartered
- 3 medium shallots, coarsely chopped
- 5 medium cloves garlic
- 1 2-inch piece ginger, peeled and coarsely chopped
- 1 jalapeño pepper, coarsely chopped
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1/2 teaspoon ground coriander
- 2 teaspoons Kashmiri chili powder
- 1 tablespoon Madras curry powder
- kosher salt as needed
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 1 quart coconut cream
- juice of 2 limes

Place turnips, shallots, garlic, ginger, jalapeño and oil in carafe of a food processor. Puree until a thick paste emerges.

In a heavy bottom saucepan over medium heat, add contents of food processor. Cook until mixture begins to sweat, and shallots become translucent. Add cumin, turmeric, coriander,

chili powder, curry powder and a pinch of kosher salt to pan. While stirring, cook for approximately 1 minute to wake up spices. Add tomato paste and stir to combine. Cook until mixture is brick red and aromatic, approximately 2 more minutes. Add coconut cream and enough water to make a saucy mixture and bring to a gentle simmer. Turn heat to low and allow mixture to cook, barely bubbling, until vegetables are very tender, approximately 30 minutes. Remove from heat, add lime juice and taste. Adjust seasoning with salt as needed. Once mixture has cooled a bit, transfer to carafe of blender and blend completely smooth. Keep warm until ready to use.

The finished sauce can be used on its own or combined with additional roasted turnips and radishes. It could also be paired with paneer cheese to make a more substantial meal.

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