

# THE GREAT OUTDOORS p. 68

## **QB** **KIRK** **COUSINS** **PUTS** **HIS** **TRUST** **IN** **THE** **PROCESS**

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**8 FANTASTIC  
OVERNIGHT  
GETAWAYS**

**NEW BOOK  
REVISITS  
HAUNTING  
BUCKHEAD  
MURDER**

**ATLANTA'S  
OWN  
JESSICA  
RABBIT**



# Dining Guide A



Pizza Verdura Sincera

**NEW  
REVIEWS**

BY VENÉ FRANCO, LIA PICARD,  
AND SAM WORLEY

## **Pizza Verdura Sincera**

Trying a new place where a beloved ice cream counter once stood stirs nostalgia. There is comfort, though, in seeing the Zesto's mural intact on the wall by the parking lot, even if it triggers a craving for a Nut Brown Crown. But restaurant life goes on, and now the draw is pizza, specifically plant-based pies. They're served in an open room with a bohemian, industrial vibe—exposed brick, aqua paint, cement floors, cherry-stained wood, and high ceilings. Seating includes banquettes, a communal table, and a few barstools (there's beer on tap and wine). Choose from half a dozen specialty pizzas and a few seasonal salads. The fresh pizza dough (made

using organic, non-GMO flour) produces a light, golden-brown crust with toasty bubbles along the rim, and a sweet and tasty blend of vegan mozzarella and cheddar ups the flavor. The standout pizza is the Messicano, with spicy vegan sausage, peppers, roasted corn, onion, garlic, and ginger for extra kick.

*Little Five Points, [pizzaverdurasincera.com](http://pizzaverdurasincera.com)*

## **Casa Balam**

A sexy, hacienda-style restaurant has opened where the staid Ted's Montana Grill in Decatur once stood. A Saturday night finds the main room filled with Latin music, candlelight, lively conversations, and views to the kitchen. Bartenders proffer colorful cocktails as quickly as servers whisk them away to guests. Booths, tables, and outdoor seating along Ponce are available,

Photograph by **Martha Williams**

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MARTHA WILLIAMS

Rina

#### El Santo Gallo

After making waves with his Mexican hot spot Palo Santo, chef Santiago Gomez opened his traditional taqueria, El Santo Gallo, in the Westside Paper development. A minimalist yet warm space offers limited indoor and outdoor seating, along with a takeout window. The tight menu sticks to the classics, including a handful of snacks (guacamole, elotes, chips and salsa) and a few protein options—steak, chicken, and pork, with mushrooms available for the veggie crowd. Choose how you want your taco prepared (volcán style, with a crispy tortilla and melted cheese, is a standout), pair it with your beverage of choice, and you'll be good to go. *Westside*, @ [@elsantogallo](#)

#### Owens and Hull BBQ

Robert Owens of Grand Champion BBQ teamed up with Bryan Hull of the pop-up Secret Pint BBQ to start Owens and Hull in Smyrna. Open only Thursday through Sunday, the joint venture offers a limited menu that changes daily. On Thursdays, the choices include a half-pound smoked-brisket burger with American cheese, smoked-onion jam, and special sauce, and a turkey sandwich with pickled red onions. Fridays and Saturdays offer more traditional barbecue fare, such as pulled pork and sliced beef brisket. Hull's signature jalapeño and cheddar sausage is always available, as are the sides that make Grand Champion stand out, like pepper jack cheese grits and tangy collard greens with bacon. *Smyrna*, [gcbq.com](#)

#### Rina

When an Atlanta restaurant opens a second location in the suburbs, it can sometimes feel like they just clicked copy and paste. Such is not the case with Rina, Tal Baum's elevated-casual Israeli restaurant, which originally opened on the BeltLine in 2020. The new outpost of Rina, at Alpharetta's Avalon shopping center, bears some similarities to its older sister. It was also designed by Smith Hanes Studio, and therefore has some of the same beachy charm in its blue and white accents and colorful pennant flags, but is perhaps a little more polished in its suburban setting. Those beach vibes were appreciated on a visit during a January day that felt anything but warm or sunny. Rina's colorful atmosphere sets a fun tone for standout dishes, like the Hummus No. 2, with roasted butternut squash, dukkah, and harissa; the squash topping popped nicely on the creamy canvas, and the hummus was whipped so smoothly, it made me wonder why the store-bought stuff is even allowed to be called the same thing as Rina's. The eggplant sabich, served over lettuce (though pita and rice are options, too), proved a star for this lover of textural variety: crispy eggplant presented alongside a hard-boiled egg, fries, sumac-spiced slaw, tangy peach amba, and Israeli salad. The lamb and beef burger, served on a challah bun with herb tahini, also satisfied. But it's the Israeli street food, like the shawarma and sabich, that shines. *Alpharetta*, [rinakitchen.com](#)

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