



FOOD & DINING

Atlanta Food & Wine Festival finds new home and more from metro Atlanta's dining scene



The Home Depot Backyard will be the home for the Atlanta Food & Wine Festival's tasting tents in September.

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This week in the metro Atlanta dining scene, a popular Asian food festival announced its lineup of vendors, a burger restaurant created a unique reservation option in the name of charity, a new chef is helming a popular Virginia-Highland restaurant and more.



Credit: Raftermen Photography

AFWF Tasting Tents, Friday (2024). (Credit: Raftermen Photography, courtesy of Atlanta Food & Wine Festival)

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Major food festival takes over back yard

The **Atlanta Food & Wine Festival**, one of the premiere events on the Atlanta restaurant scene's calendar, announced earlier this week that its tasting tents will set up camp in the Home Depot Backyard adjacent to Mercedes-Benz Stadium.

The tasting tents will take over the 11-acre greenspace from Sept. 11-14. Last year's festival took place in Historic Fourth Ward Park across the street from Ponce City Market, but organizers said in a press release that the Backyard will provide a more spacious layout and enhanced special areas like a culinary demonstration stage, VIP lounge and sponsored activation spaces. The location also offers improved parking and transportation options, including convenient access to MARTA.



Credit: Raftermen Photography

AFWF Tasting Tents, Friday (2024). (Credit: Raftermen Photography, courtesy of Atlanta Food & Wine Festival)

Festival officials indicated that the move to the Home Depot Backyard was not a one-year arrangement.

“As Atlanta grows, so does our Atlanta Food & Wine, and with this growth, it was time to find a new long-term home,” said Brett Friedman, CEO and founder of [event management company a21](#).

The festival will bring together more than 200 chefs from across the region and country, including several known for their work with the Food Network, such as Andrew Zimmern, Marcus Samuelsson and Scott Conant.

Sept. 11-14. 1 Backyard Way, Atlanta. atlfoodandwinefestival.com



Credit: Handout

Images from the first Panda Fest at Atlantic Station in April 2025. (Courtesy of Panda Fest)

Wildly popular Panda Fest returns

Outdoor Asian food festival **Panda Fest** has announced the vendor lineup for its return to Atlantic Station early next month.

The September event will be Panda Fest's second visit to Atlanta this year after the first sold out in April. The main attractions are street food stalls and an artisan market. Additional highlights include live entertainment like dance groups performing K-pop routines and traditional arts from across the Asian diaspora, such as calligraphy, sugar painting and paper cutting, according to a press release.

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Panda Fest will see food vendors from across the country as well as local names **Buns & Bites, Flames & Skewers, Lemon Sweets Bakery, Rebel Teahouse** and **Yugen Sushi Fusion**.

Tickets are available for general admission and VIP tiers at [Eventbrite](#).



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One-of-a-kind reservation

If you've ever wished you could reserve a table at **NFA Burger's** new Avalon location, you'll have the opportunity soon - with the minor caveat that it'll cost \$100.

However, the \$100 reservation fee goes to charity, not the restaurant. The unique program is called the Giving Kitchen Table and aims to raise money for the Atlanta-based nonprofit that supports food-service industry workers facing unexpected crisis.

Only one Giving Kitchen Table reservation will be available each day, according to a news release. From Monday-Saturday, the reservation will be at 7:30 p.m. for up to four people. On Sundays, the table will be available at noon.

Those who book the reservation will receive full service at their table, setting the experience apart from the standard counter service. The reservation fee does not include food, drink or gratuity.

3180 Avalon Blvd., Alpharetta. 770-272-2735, nfaburger.com





Credit: Handout

Ela's new executive chef Gizzy Rawlins. (Courtesy of Ela)

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Other items of interest

Ela, the Mediterranean restaurant in the Virginia-Highland neighborhood, introduced Decatur native Gizzy Rawlins as its new executive chef this week. Rawlins is a veteran of Fifth Group restaurants South City Kitchen and Ecco. She was also the first female line cook at now-shuttered Rathbun's, according to a news release.

1186 N. Highland Ave., Atlanta. 404-873-4656, ela-atlanta.com





Rina, the casual Middle Eastern restaurant on the Atlanta Beltline's Eastside Trail, refreshed both its food and beverage menus, representatives announced this week. New food items include a beef kebab; hearty, vegetarian sabich hummus; harissa honey wings; and shawarma hummus. David Little, the new beverage director for Oliva Restaurant Group, also overhauled Rina's drink menu, introducing a negroni sour, nitro espresso martini and another martini that features vodka, vanilla, passionfruit and a spritz of sparkling wine.

699 Ponce De Leon Ave., Atlanta. 404-343-0362, rinakitchen.com

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Credit: Handout

The ribbon cutting ceremony at Whit's Frozen Custard in downtown Woodstock. (Courtesy of Whit's Frozen Custard)

Restaurant openings

Whit's Frozen Custard opened this week in downtown Woodstock, according to a news release. The franchise is locally owned and operated by Anne and Andrew Stair, who have lived in the area for more than a decade. The Ohio-based chain has four other Georgia locations: Augusta, Columbus, Newnan and Roswell.

8200 Main St., Woodstock. 678-403-2036, whitsfrozencustard.com

Daydreamer Coffee opened Friday on Peachtree Street in Midtown, the Texas-based chain announced in a news release. The shop is inside the Rambler, an apartment tower catering to students. This is the second Atlanta location for Daydreamer Coffee. Its first makes its home at the nearby Whistler apartment building.



Tipsy Thaiger's soft opening is planned for Aug. 26, according to the restaurant's Instagram. The new concept from Birdie Niyomkun is located at Roswell Town Square, where it will serve seasonal Thai food and a lengthy cocktail menu.

605 Atlanta St., Roswell. tipsythaiger.com

Nana's Chicken & Waffles, owned by chef Kelli Ferrell, opened in Sandy Springs on Friday. Ferrell is known as a cast member on Bravo's "Real Housewives of Atlanta," and Friday's grand opening event was filmed for the show. Located in the Prado development, the restaurant is the second Nana's location. The other is in McDonough.

5600 Roswell Road NE, Sandy Springs. 404-907-4000, nanaschickenandwaffles.com

The Grove at **Monday Night Brewing** and **Northern China Eatery** both opened on the Beltline this week, while fine-dining restaurant **Elise** opened in the former Table 1280 space at the Woodruff Arts Center, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported.

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Explore Two buzzy restaurants open on the Atlanta Beltline this week



Credit: Handout

A selection of breakfast items at Buttermilk Biscuit, the College Park brunch restaurant that opened a second location in Stonecrest. (Courtesy of Buttermilk Biscuit)

New restaurant announcements

Buttermilk Biscuit, the College Park brunch restaurant, is expanding with a location in Stonecrest, according to a news release. The restaurant focuses on classic brunch offerings with a modern twist.

7655 Mall Parkway, Stonecrest. 770-559-8323, [buttermilkbiscuitatl.com](https://www.buttermilkbiscuitatl.com)

grill, already has Atlanta-area locations in Dunwoody and Peachtree Corners.

255 Legends Place, Atlanta. [jalexanders.com](https://www.jalexanders.com)

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Honey Bubble Tea [announced on Instagram](#) that a second location would be coming to Atlanta, though no other details were released.

Restaurant closings

Cultivate will close its location at the Battery Atlanta later this month to make way for J. Alexanders, [Tomorrow’s News Today](#) reported.

About the Author



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Henri Hollis is a reporter and restaurant critic for the Food & Dining team. Formerly a freelance writer and photographer with a focus on food and restaurants, he joined the AJC full-time in January 2021, first covering breaking news. He is a lifelong Atlantan and a graduate of Georgia Tech.

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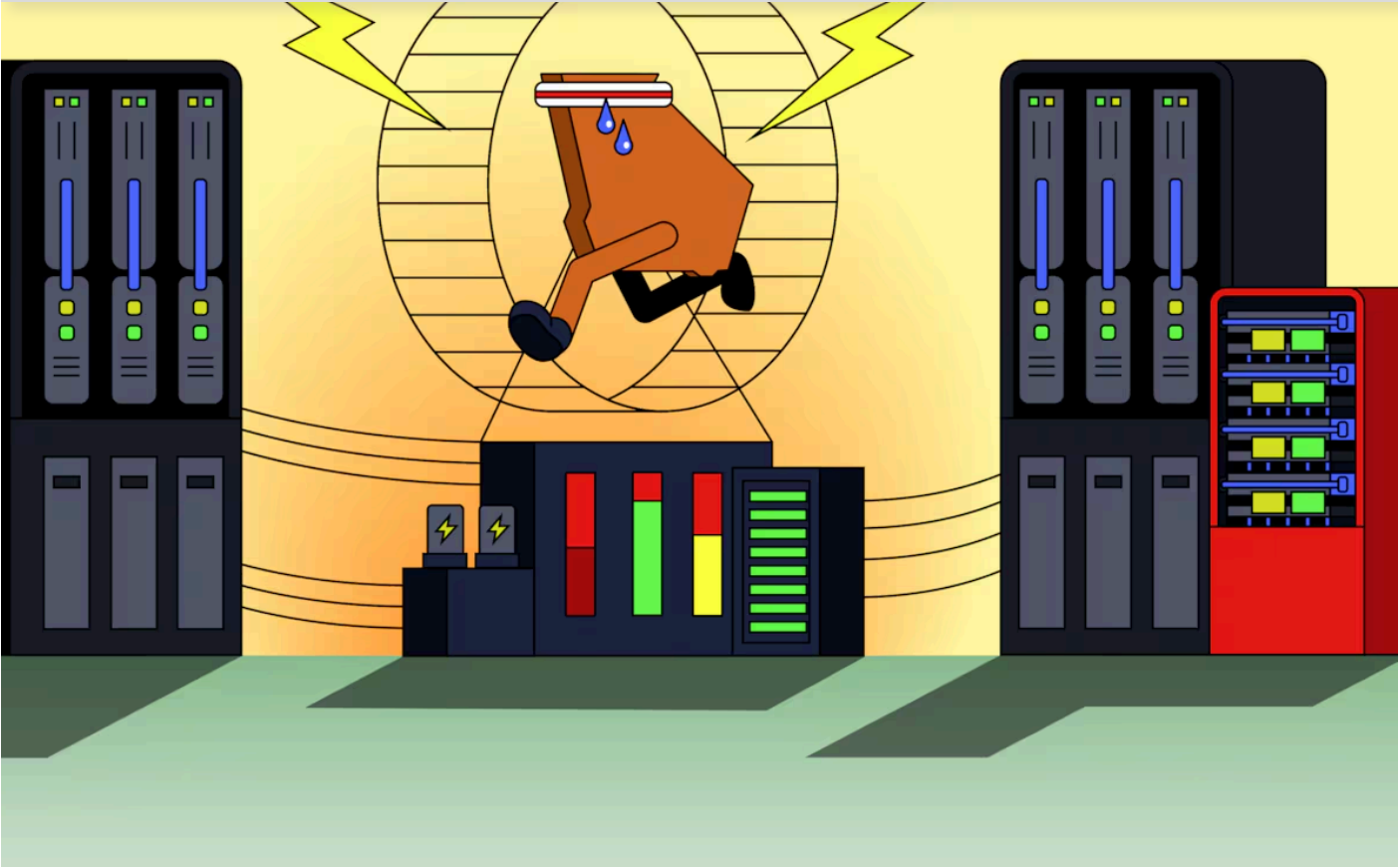


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