

# PORTICO

OCTOBER 2003  
\$4.50

## BIRMINGHAM

### City Magic

Loft Living

Fall Outerwear

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Home Idea Guide



a small gallery, there is plenty for the eye to behold. While gazing about, sip the "Simply G"—a vodka martini enhanced with rose champagne and served with frozen seedless grapes—one of Beverage Manager Cheree Dobbs' signature drinks.

Prior to running the kitchen at G, classically French trained Chef Geoffrey Slate worked with Kathy at the Terrace Café in Birmingham's Museum of Art. Watering the mouths of his patrons, Chef Slate provides dishes only he can claim by combining both local ingredients with those from Africa, Eastern Europe, Asia, and the Mediterranean to create a unique flavor that will cause you to come back for more. "Our menu [at G] is very much market- and weather-driven," Slate says. "We talk to our purveyors every day to find out what is at peak quality and what ingredients are on the horizon."

With the leaves beginning to change color and the temperatures turning cooler, a visit to G will be sure to leave you feeling all warm inside. "Fall is my favorite time to cook," claims Slate. "The first cool weather turns on something primal in us. Our appetites rev up and the cooling ocean waters bring the largest array of fresh seafood. It is also a time when the last of the summer crops are still available and we get the greatest combination of warm and cool weather crops available locally."

After dinner, the "Choco'licious" cocktail—a blend of Stoli vanilla and light crème de cacao with a Hershey Kiss garnish—another of Dobbs' creations, is a sweet ending to any meal. If this tasty cocktail doesn't cure your craving, the Bittersweet Chocolate Pyramid with Cardamom Ice Cream will surely cause your taste buds to tingle.

"We have a great eclectic clientele...local notables, young professionals, foodies, and others ready to experience street-level urban fine dining for the first time in many years," says Slate. "We regularly see the movers and shakers of the city," he adds, "local CEO's, politicians, and a who's who of patrons of the arts. We have strong ties to the arts community from our long association with the museum and other arts organizations."

While the clientele at G pulls from the surrounding downtown district, many of Kathy's longtime patrons have remained loyal and ventured out to enjoy the atmosphere G provides. "We are in the celebration business, both in our catering and the restaurant, what we do allows us to be a part of others lives...we have a passion for food and a love of entertaining," claims Kathy.

With seating for 130—a lower dining room, a mezzanine, a quaint bar and an outside terrace—G is the perfect place for entertaining clients, visiting with friends, a special occasion or simply a glamorous night out. Slate concludes, "We believe we have only begun to touch the level of quality in food and service that we are capable of. We believe in a commitment to excellence. We want people to look at us in a few years and say that we were integral in transforming the City Center into a vibrant landscape of urban vigor." ●



### Spicy Green Tomato Soup with Peppered Shrimp

- 3/4 pounds fresh shell-on gulf shrimp, size 26-30 per pound
- 2 tablespoons fresh ground black pepper
- 3 tablespoons pure olive oil
- 2 quarts chicken stock
- 2 bay leaves
- 1/2 cup pure olive oil
- 2 each medium yellow onions peeled and julienned
- 5 each fresh garlic cloves sliced thin
- 2-4 fresh jalapeño peppers stemmed and sliced thin with seeds
- 4 pounds fresh green tomatoes cored and quartered
- 1/2 cup fresh cilantro roughly chopped
- 3 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 2 teaspoons green Tabasco
- Kosher salt to taste

Peel shrimp reserving shells. Devein and split shrimp in half lengthwise.

Toss shrimp halves with black pepper and two tablespoons of oil and refrigerate.

In non-reactive stockpot lightly sauté shells until pink and add stock and bay leaves. Bring to a simmer and cook for 20-25 minutes. Remove from heat, strain and discard shells. (Can be done a day ahead and refrigerated until ready to use.)

Sauté onions, peppers and garlic with 1/2 cup olive oil in heavy bottomed non-reactive 8 qt. pot until translucent. Add tomatoes and stock. Bring to a simmer and cook for 15-20 minutes or until tomatoes are tender. Stir in cilantro and remove from heat.

Carefully puree in blender or food processor until smooth. Return to heat and stir in lime juice, Tabasco, and salt to taste.

Heat a heavy skillet to medium high. Add tablespoon of oil and shrimp and cook until shrimp are just cooked through.

Place 3-5 of the shrimp pieces in the bottom of each bowl and ladle in soup. Garnish with a cilantro sprig and serve immediately. Serves 8

**Q.** What team would you be rooting for when you served this recipe?

**A.** "I've always been an Alabama fan. In 1967, when I worked for Channel 13, Bear Bryant bought me a cup of hot chocolate from a vending machine. He was so gracious, so I've been even more of a fan since that day."

**Q.** What would you serve with Tuscan White Bean Pâte with Roasted Red Peppers?

**A.** "We're so barbecue oriented in the South, I'd probably grill a pork loin roast, slice it thinly and serve it with miniature buns, a chipotle chili pepper barbecue sauce and a green onion mayonnaise."



**Kathy G. Mezrano**

**KATHY G. AND COMPANY, INC.**

**Q.** How do you entertain at home?

**A.** "My parties are planned, but relaxed. People always gravitate to our kitchen, where I spread the hors d'oeuvres on a counter. I have two glass-top tables on my sun porch, where I can seat 16 to 20 guests with no problem."

**Q.** Where did you get your love for food and entertaining?

**A.** "It's in my blood. Coming from a Lebanese family, food has been the centerpiece of my life. My father was a wholesale produce broker, and my mother cooked for large numbers at the church. I've always loved entertaining, and I love pretty presentations. Serving good food is a natural way to please people."

**Q.** What would you have done differently 15 to 20 years ago?

**A.** Twenty years ago we were using package mixes and sour cream dips. Today, I'm using less fat in my recipes, and I'm including more vegetarian recipes in entertaining menus."



## Tuscan White Bean Pâte with Roasted Red Peppers

6 cups cannellini or great Northern beans, drained  
4 large eggs, lightly beaten  
1 cup butter, melted  
1 cup whipping cream  
1 1/2 cups shredded carrots  
1 cup chopped fresh parsley  
1 cup fine dry bread crumbs  
8 green onions, finely chopped  
1 medium onion, finely chopped  
2 garlic cloves, minced  
3 tablespoons chopped fresh basil  
2 teaspoons salt  
1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves  
1/2 teaspoon ground coriander  
1/2 teaspoon cracked black pepper  
1 to 2 roasted red bell peppers, cut into thin strips  
1-2 teaspoons toasted sesame seed  
Garnish: gourmet greens, shredded carrots

Pulse beans in a food processor 3 to 4 times; process until smooth, stopping occasionally to scrape down sides. Spoon into a large mixing bowl. Stir in eggs and next 13 ingredients.

Pour bean mixture into a 2-quart loaf pan or terrine mold; cover with parchment paper.

Bake at 400° for 1 hour or until a long wooden pick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool completely.

Unmold onto a serving platter; top with red pepper strips. Sprinkle with sesame seeds. Serve with flatbread, crostini, or crackers. Yield: 18 to 20 servings.



### Sweet Potato Biscuits

(developed by Chef Geoffrey Slate)

1 pound sweet potatoes  
4 cups all-purpose flour  
1½ tablespoons baking powder  
2 tablespoons light brown sugar  
½ teaspoons ground nutmeg  
1 tablespoon iodized salt  
1 tablespoon coarse ground black pepper  
½ cup plus 1 tablespoon chilled unsalted butter  
Whipping cream as needed

Pierce potato skins with a fork and bake in a preheated oven at 350°F oven until very tender. Remove from oven and place in refrigerator to cool. When thoroughly chilled, peel and mash potatoes. Sift together flour, sugar, salt, nutmeg, and baking powder. Stir in pepper. Cut butter into flour mixture until pea size. Make a well in center of flour mixture and add the reserved potatoes. Mix until just incorporated. If dough is dry, add a little whipping cream (2 to 3 tablespoons). The dough should be sticky, but manageable.

On a floured board, roll out the dough to three quarters of an inch thick. You can cut the biscuits with a biscuit cutter, or cut them into strips and then into triangles.

Place on a cookie sheet and bake at 325°F for about twenty minutes. The biscuits should rise slightly and become a light golden brown.

Cool biscuits on a rack (if you can wait that long!) Store cooled biscuits in an airtight container. They are still great the next day! Makes about two dozen biscuits.



### Lemon Yogurt with Blueberries

(developed by G's Pastry Chef, Jennifer Long)

2 cups plain yogurt  
¼ cup powdered sugar  
1 tablespoon lemon zest  
¼ cup cream  
2 teaspoons gelatine  
1 cup blueberries

Place yogurt, sugar, and lemon rind in a bowl and mix. Allow to stand until room temperature. Place cream in a saucepan over low heat until hot. Sprinkle the gelatine over cream and stir for two minutes until dissolved. Add cream and gelatine mix to the yogurt and stir to combine. Fold in 1 cup of fresh blueberries. Put in glasses and chill for three hours. Serves 4

## all about the wine

What many people don't know about G is their excellence in providing Birmingham and even the world with one of the finest and most extensive wine lists available in the South. Recently awarded *Wine Spectator* magazine's Award of Excellence 2003, G proves to be a notch above the rest in the world of culinary arts. "It is almost unheard of for an establishment this new to receive this level of recognition," claims Slate. "When a new wine is added to the menu, the staff treats it like Christmas. You can see the excitement in their eyes when they describe it to our guests." Cheree Dobbs, G's Beverage Manager, has taken strides in providing G's customers with a flavorful and highly recognized wine menu. With an average of 120 to 150 selections available and nearly 80% of those American, this restaurant is making gigantic steps in the wine community.

"We regularly have some of America's premier winemakers here when they are in the area. Birmingham is known among the national wine community as an aficionados' town," Slate states. "The city's reputation for wine sophistication is international. Occasionally when talking to winemakers from Europe and South Africa, we're always amazed at the instant level of recognition and respect the mention of 'Birmingham, Alabama' gets. There are quite a number of privately owned world-class wine collections in Birmingham, and we are also home to the fifth-largest chapter of the International Wine and Food Society in America."