The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution | Sunday, October 22, 2023

FOOD&DINING

AT HOME WITH ATLANTA CHEFS

Away from work, Umi chef likes to keep it simple

Todd Dae Kulper spent his childhood in the Midwest, but life and love have brought him full circle, to the tastes of Asia.

By Wendell Brock
For the AJC

Todd Dae Kulper's first restaurant job was making dishes at a fried Lobster in Iowa City. The thing that really got him were those darn crab-and-cheese-stuffed mushrooms. The dairy would be reduced onto the goods dishes that he had to "scrub them in toxic chemicals and chisel all that cheese off."

"I'm still traumatized," Kulper said.

This was not the career he envisioned when he went off to the University of Iowa as a math, physics and astronomy school dropout. He was working to pay his way through college left work, some of which he found tedious, so it didn't take him long to move on to the kitchen.

Kulper, 41, executive chef at Buckhead sushi restaurant Umi, was born in South Korea and adopted when he was 2 years old by a couple who ran an Iowa dairy farm. He grew up eating tomatoes and cranberries from the family garden and fermented beef and milk.

Chef Todd Dae Kulper shows just how one should mix a bibimbap, Korean mixed rice with meat and assorted vegetables.

As a cook, he has worked at steakhouse chains — where, he said, speed and quantity are valued over quality — and at a bevy of exclusive — and French bistros, where he had access to truffles and foie gras. He has been employed by Soho Mio eshita in Miami Beach and staged under Thomas Keller in California.

But he likes to keep it simple at the Johns Creek home he shares with his South Korean-born wife, Mina, their 11-year-old daughter, Alexandra, their dog, Harry, and their pet python, Zeus.

At Umi, he creates a dish-to-watch assembled duck toast with shoshu yuzu and salad leaf and a dish-to-share that includes grilled Spanish tail and diver scallop with uni and crab fat sauce. But his home cooking brings to mind Ina Garten's mantra. "Store-bought is fine."

Or in his case: H Mart.

Demonstrating a quick bibimbap, he put Korean short grain in the rice cooker, popped open a jar of H Mart bulgogi mar-

Kulper continued on E14.

BIKES AND DANCING

At the hops: Dance classes offer another reason to visit breweries

He teaches others to trip the light fantastic amid kegs and steins.

By Lia Picard
For the AJC

A nervous energy filled the 5,700-square-foot Garden Room at Wild Heaven Brewery in Avondale on a Wednesday evening. Friends and strangers gathered near the bar, sipping beer and making conversation, until Wilder Smith, clad in black and sporting a headset microphone, gathered everyone on the dance floor.

Beneath the faux-foil and white Christmas lights, the group, which had grown to 80 people, divided into "leads" and "follows" and eagerly awaited Smith's instruction. Tonight's dance lesson he was about to teach.

Smith has taught partner dance classes (which include swing, salsa and rumba) since July at several metro area breweries.

His Wednesday night classes at Wild Heaven have grown particularly popular, drawing as many as 100 people. A ticket for the two-hour dance class costs $10 (first timers get a free drink).

Each class focuses on a different style of dance and the partners rotate several times, so it doesn't matter whether someone comes alone or not.

Wilder Smith dances private moves with his co-instructor Josie Brown while teaching a weekly dance class at the Wild Heaven West End brewery earlier this month.

Some of the people attending Smith's classes are seeking community as much as a dance lesson. "Post-pandemic right now, and with technology being the way it is, everybody's wanting to get out and make genuine connections with people," Smith said.

Drew Allen, 30, who works in sales for a manufacturing company, said he found out about the class at Wild Heaven after seeing across a Facebook ad.

"I'm single, I'm introverted, I work a lot ... so I don't get a lot of opportunities to go out and meet people my age with my interests," Allen said.

Megan Stalley, who works in the film industry as an assistant director, joined Smith's second Wednesday class and has been dancing every week since then. "I love the music and I love the social atmosphere of it," she said.

The story of how Smith, 34, became a dance teacher starts with his time at the University of Georgia. Having trained in ballroom dance as a high schooler, he discovered a flair for partner and

Dancing continued on E14.

DINING NEWS

Peoplestown food hall plans to add more eateries

A full-service restaurant and three more food stalls have been added to the food and beverage offerings at the forthcoming Terminal South development in Peoplestown.

Sit-down restaurant PÜR Zen Mimosa Wine Bar and food hall kiosks Smooth N Groove smoothie bar, slider concept DM Sliders and Flat-Out Flatbreads will open in the development in mid-2024.

Projected to open in spring 2024, Switchman Hall at Terminal South will be home to 18 stalls. Food hall tenants that have already been announced include Life Bistro, Original Hot Dog Factory, Perfect Seasoning, Southern Grace, Tiger K Cup Bob, Sabu K Ramen and The Cream.

Oxtails from PÜR Zen Mimosa Wine Bar, set to open in mid-2024.

Sign up for the AJC Food and Dining Newsletter
ajc.com/newsletters

Dont miss stories like this by liking Atlanta Restaurant Scene

#ATLDiningNews
#ajcdining
#AtlantaRestaurantScene

EAT MORE INSIDE:

Jimmie's Jerk Chicken's Smoked Pulled Lamb Shoulder Sandwich with Tostones.

Growth continues

Atomic Biscuit's Intergalactic Salad.

It's intergalactic

DINING NEWS

Peoplestown food hall plans to add more eateries

A full-service restaurant and three more food stalls have been added to the food and beverage offerings at the forthcoming Terminal South development in Peoplestown.

Sit-down restaurant PÜR Zen Mimosa Wine Bar and food hall kiosks Smooth N Groove smoothie bar, slider concept DM Sliders and Flat-Out Flatbreads will open in the development in mid-2024.

Projected to open in spring 2024, Switchman Hall at Terminal South will be home to 18 stalls. Food hall tenants that have already been announced include Life Bistro, Original Hot Dog Factory, Perfect Seasoning, Southern Grace, Tiger K Cup Bob, Sabu K Ramen and The Cream.

Oxtails from PÜR Zen Mimosa Wine Bar, set to open in mid-2024. COURTESY OF PÜR ZEN MIMOSA WINE BAR

TERMINAL SOUTH
Peoplestown, Atlanta