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Cooking farm-fresh with chef Nicolas Bour of the Farmhouse at Serenbe

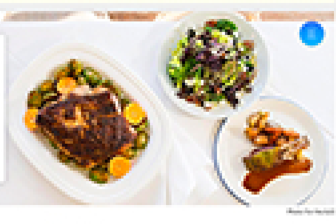
Photo: For the AJC

Food | 9 hours ago
By Bob Townsend, For the AJC

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Like many old friends and fans, I was delighted by the news late last year that Nicolas Bour would be returning to Serenbe as the executive chef, VP of Food and Beverage for Serenbe Hospitality restaurant concepts.

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Founded by the Nygren family in 2004, Serenbe is an idyllic biophilic community among the farmlands of Chattahoochee Hills, southwest of Atlanta. As part of his duties, Bour is now overseeing three Serenbe restaurants, the Farmhouse, where he'd been the chef once before, the Hill, and the Blue Eyed Daisy Bakeshop, as well as working on several new concepts.

I first met Bour when he was the chef owner of Iris, a pioneering and much-beloved fine dining restaurant in East Atlanta, which sadly closed in 2005.

But his long resume includes stints at the Ritz-Carlton Buckhead, Ocean House, Rhode Island, and Loews Coronado Bay Resort and Humphreys in the San Diego area, and opening a new dining destination at the Fishbowl Resort in Hawaii, not to mention competing on the Food Network's "Beat Bobby Flay."

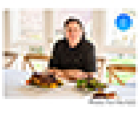
Photo: For the AJC

Recently, we asked Bour to share some recipes that mark his return to Serenbe, and reflect on the French country cooking he's melding into the menu at the Farmhouse, where seasonal ingredients from nearby farms and produce from the restaurant's kitchen garden have always been a focus.

"Coming back here was a natural thing," Bour, who is married with a young daughter, told me during an afternoon visit to the Farmhouse at Serenbe. "I want to raise my daughter in a safe place. I want to be around like-minded, artistic people, and Serenbe is full of those. Of course, I already had so many friends here, so coming back was really easy.

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"And it's good to feel wanted. Here I feel like I can probably just cook until the day I die. That's really all I want to do. I get up in the morning, and I can't wait to get here. I couldn't wait to go to the farmers market this morning. That's just something I've been looking for since I left here, and it's very elusive."

Asked if he thought the overuse of the term farm-to-table has made it lose of meaning, Bour laughed.

"I think you agree with me on that," he said. "I call it 'the way.' People ask me if my food is farm-to-table and I say, 'No, it's just the right way.' But one thing that has remained constant here is the dedication to ingredients and execution. Farm-to-table is real here."

Asked about his dedication to classic French cooking, Bour turned serious.

"I believe that kind of food will never go out of style," he said. "Even though I'm not doing pommes soufflés or ridiculous garnishes. But I think French technique is always going to be here. I like to think of this as my own little South of France right here in Serenbe.

"We work around our local producers, and they drive the menu, whether it's pork chops from Comfort Farms or lettuce from one of our farmers. The Farmhouse Salad here is special. The dressing is a mustard vinaigrette that comes from my family and has been around since the ... But the lettuces are whatever we can get at the time."

Looking to the future of Serenbe, and true farm-to-table access for the community, Bour said there were exciting things in the works.

"We're going to develop another 10 acres of our farm, which is nothing but good news," he said. "We need to do that because we have so many CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) shares now. Our farm not only supports restaurants here, but the community as well."

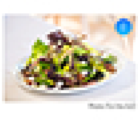
Photo: For the AJC

Recipes

These surprisingly easy recipes from executive chef Nicolas Bour of the Farmhouse at Serenbe combine classic French techniques with farm-fresh ingredients and hearty proteins.

Farmhouse Salad With Mustard Vinaigrette

This salad is a staple of the Farmhouse at Serenbe menu with a mustard dressing that easily adapts to all kinds of seasonal lettuces straight from the farmers market.

Recipe: Farmhouse Salad With Mustard Vinaigrette

[illegible]

Nutritional information

[illegible]

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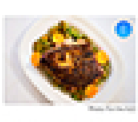
Photo: For the AJC

Comfort Farms Pork Shoulder With Citrus and Beer

For this easy but flavor-packed dish, Bour buys local pork from Comfort Farms in Milledgeville, where the mission is to help veterans who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder heal. But use any good-quality pork shoulder you can find. And if you can't find seasonal sweet-tart Satsumas, other oranges will work.

Recipe: Comfort Farms Pork Shoulder With Citrus and Beer

- Preheat oven to 325.
- [illegible]

Nutritional information

[illegible]

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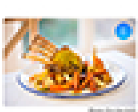
Photo: For the AJC

Parsley Crusted Lamb Racks With Roasted Root Vegetables

More elegant than a roast, with much less cooking time, this parsley crusted lamb dish regularly lands on the menu at the Farmhouse at Serenbe. Serve it now with seasonal winter vegetables.

Recipe: Parsley Crusted Lamb Racks With Roasted Root Vegetables

[illegible]

Nutritional information

[illegible]

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Farmhouse Root Vegetables

Simplicity defined with winter root vegetables, fresh thyme and ground cumin making for a savory-sweet seasonal side. Note: Leave the vegetables unpeeled but wash them well.

Recipe: Farmhouse Root Vegetables

- Preheat oven to 375.
- [illegible]

Nutritional information

[illegible]

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