

# Living

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Photos by HYOSUB SHIN / hshin@ajc.com

Pop-up dinners play on the farm-to-table trend. Some of Atlanta's top chefs partner with local farmers for seasonal menus. **Joe Truex**, of Repast, serves food during a late July event at a Buckhead high-rise for which the guests had one day's notice of the location.

## A taste for secrecy

### Pop-up dinners bring together farmers, chefs and food lovers

By ELIZABETH LEE / [elee@ajc.com](mailto:elee@ajc.com)

The main course is arriving, pasture-reared lamb turned into a hearty, wine-infused bolognese sauce served over hand-cut papardelle pasta.

Guests lean forward as the third course of five is set before them. One starts reminiscing about a pet lamb from his childhood. Another shushes him quickly.

It's one thing to know where your food comes from, the reason this intimate farm-to-table dinner is taking place. It's another to give full disclosure when the farmers' young daughter is just across the table, snuggled on her mother's lap awaiting her plate.

Still, this pop-up dinner, an Atlanta version of one of the hottest dining trends around, is about connecting farmers with chefs and eaters. It's hard to be too quiet with



Truex prepares grilled Riverview Farms pork belly, smoked summer tomato sauce and truffle creamed corn for a pop-up dinner. This gathering was for the Kudzu Supper Club.

a big plate of yum before you, especially when several glasses of wines have preceded it.

The guests have gathered on just one day's notice on the terrace of a Buckhead high-rise. The hook: An underground happening that gets diners even closer to the field than a prime booth at the burgeoning number of farm-to-table restaurants in Atlanta. Farmers, some

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### UPCOMING EVENTS

**Aug. 16:** Matt Harris of Trois cooks at Hanson Farms in Cumming. \$150.

**Oct. 4:** 5 Seasons Brewing and Gaia Gardens in DeKalb County. \$150.

**Nov. 8:** David Sweeney of Dynamic Dish in Atlanta. \$125.

**Dec. 7:** Holiday dinner. \$200.

Taste Network also is coordinating four farm-to-table benefits for Slow Food's Atlanta chapter in September, with prices ranging from \$50 to \$150 per person.

For a complete list, see [www.tastenetwork.org](http://www.tastenetwork.org).

## Show of 20 sculptures a tribute to new ABG

The botanical garden scores a coup to mark its expansion with upcoming exhibit of famed artist Henry Moore.

By CATHERINE FOX / [cfox@ajc.com](mailto:cfox@ajc.com)

The Atlanta Botanical Garden will celebrate the debut of its expansion in May with an exhibition of the revered sculptor Henry Moore.

The largest outdoor display of his work ever in the United States, "Moore in America" will feature 20 monumental sculptures, both the reclining figures for which the late British artist is most famous and his organic abstractions.

Though still seeking sponsors for the \$1.3 million exhibit, the garden staff is going full speed ahead in the planning. Curators from the Henry Moore Foundation in Great Britain visited a year ago to help determine the placement throughout the property, will be featured at the botanical garden's new visitors center and new Southern Seasons Garden.

"There will be a Moore around every corner," says executive director Mary Pat Matheson.

Moore has long topped Matheson's wish list for an art in the garden show. "I love the organic nature of his work," she says. "It's perfect for the garden."

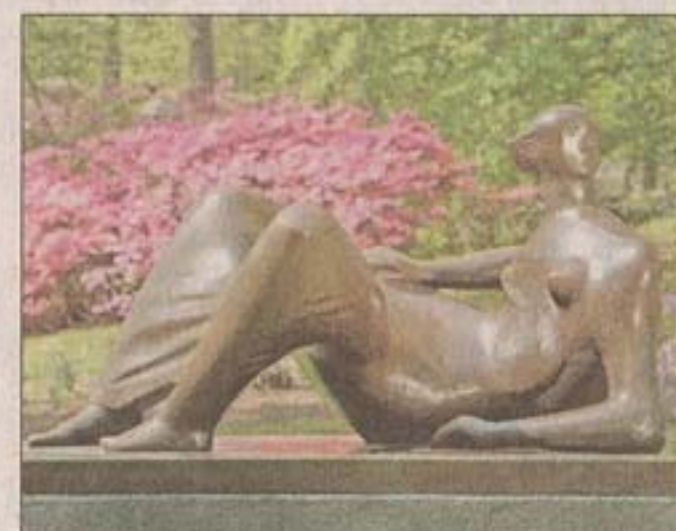
When the Moore foundation's exhibition at London's Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, opened last year, Matheson began lobbying the foundation to bring it stateside. The New York Botanical Garden had the same idea, so the show became a joint venture. "Moore in America" opened in New York May 22 and runs through Nov. 2.

The Atlanta setting departs from the pastoral or open-plaza setting in which Moore's work is most commonly seen.

"Our site is horticulturally intense," Matheson says. "Our palette is colors, tropics, flowers."

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► **ONLINE:** See a sneak preview of "Moore in America" at the New York Botanical Garden's Web site, [www.nybg.org](http://www.nybg.org).



JOHN PEDEN, courtesy of Henry Moore Foundation  
Artist Henry Moore is most famous for his reclining sculptures (above, "Reclining Figure: Angles").



# Dinner: Farmers, chefs, foodies feast

► Continued from E1

of the city's top chefs and a sommelier narrate each meal, introducing courses and dropping the kind of insider details that foodies crave.

This gathering is the fourth for the Kudzu Supper Club, organized by a wine specialist and a chef-turned-farm manager. Held in private homes, on farms and in restaurants around Atlanta, they're put together in secret, with guests learning the location just before the meal.

"I hate the phrase 'foodie,' but it's kind of my thing," says Kirstin Popper, an advertising executive who used to run the Atlanta chapter of Wine Brats.

"Good food, good wine, it's what I want to spend my money on. It's experiential."

Cathy Ding, a lawyer who writes the Live to Nibble blog, snaps photos of each course. By the time the lamb rolls around, she's reaching her limit.

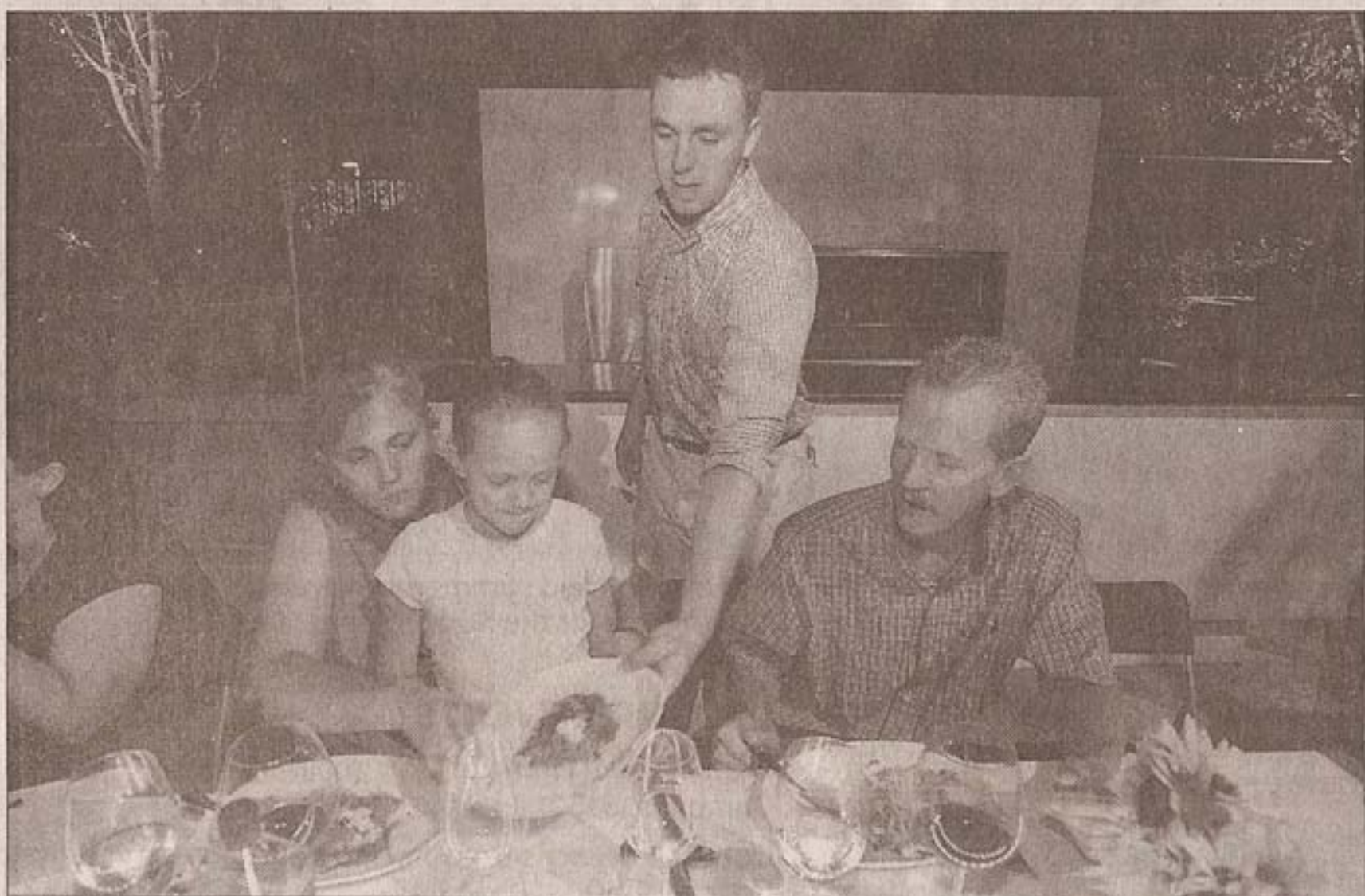
"It's very good," she says. "I wish they had doggie bags."

## 'This was our answer'

The \$125-per-plate dinner, held in late July, showcased the cooking of chefs Joe Truex and Mihoko Obunai of Repast restaurant, and produce and meats from Woodland Gardens, River-view Farms, Gum Creek Farms and Beech Creek Farms.

The lineup started with appetizers of Gala melon wrapped with country ham, and included a watermelon and octopus salad; grilled pork belly draped over truffled creamed corn; a wine and cheese course; and the first of the season's apples, prepared in a tatin with Gruyere ice cream.

Next up is a five-course heirloom tomato supper on Aug. 16 at a farm near Cumming, with reservations closing Tuesday. Previous meals have featured chefs from Bacchanalia, Trois and Muss & Turner's,



Cory Mosser serves Gum Creek Farms lamb bolognese to Alecia Searcy (left), her daughter Jessie, 10, and husband Tommy. The Searcys raised the lamb.

HYOSUB SHIN / hshin@ajc.com

with settings ranging from the Castleberry Hill loft district in downtown Atlanta to the farm at Serenbe in south Fulton.

Brady Lowe, who specializes in wine and cheese pairings with his company, Taste Network, puts together the dinners with Cory Mosser, a former chef who's been working as a farmers' liaison around Atlanta for a couple of years. Mosser has just been tapped for the farm manager's job at Hampton Island, the exclusive coastal Georgia retreat that's home to actors Ben Affleck and Jennifer Garner.

"This was our answer to what we could do to bring farmers and chefs closer together," Lowe tells the group of 25.

The look is casual — rope lighting runs down the center of the long table, which is decorated with sunflowers and zinnias from Mosser's yard and arranged in Mason jars. Lowe is wearing jeans and unlaced black Nikes.

Other guests are decked out in everything from little black dresses to bold checkered shirts. The waiting line for the valet includes a Ferrari and a pickup truck with a Georgia Cattlemen's Asso-

ciation tag.

Henry Rischitelli Jr., who's driving the Ferrari, works in corporate sports branding and is devoting more time to gourmet pursuits. He's been to the Food & Wine Classic in Aspen, Colo., counts one of the city's top chefs among his friends, and is savoring every bite of the lamb-sauced pasta.

"It was incredible," he said.

## Guests reuse their forks

Tommy and Alecia Searcy of Gum Creek Farms near Carrollton raised the lamb, and they're sitting across the table. In Atlanta for deliveries, they decided to stick around for the dinner.

A guest asks why they're raising their pigs and lambs on pasture and eschewing conventional agricultural methods.

Alecia points to 10-year-old Jessica, whose head is leaning against her mother's shoulder.

"I grew up on a farm where my granddaddy raised what they ate," she said. "You go through a point where it's not the coolest thing there is, but you come back to it."

The sustainability ethos

that guides the Searcys' farming shows up at the dinner, too. Guests hold onto salad forks after each course, to save water and soap.

Lowe is pouring wines from an Oregon vineyard that uses sustainable methods. But there's a bit of a quandary.

The more wine he pours, the more glass bottles he empties. That means more energy will be used to create glass bottles to replace them. We've just heard from a rep for Fiji Water, who assures guests that we're drinking the only carbon-negative water in the world. It comes in plastic bottles, which she says take less energy to manufacture than glass.

Lowe finds himself in the unenviable position of following her with offers of liquid in glass bottles. Still, he's got an answer.

"You find your own level of responsibility," he said. "That's what these dinners are about."

Most guests opt for more wine.

And resolve to do as he recommends:

Shop at farmers' markets to prepare dinner for friends, who will then be encouraged to shop there, broadening the circle.