

Gerry Klaskala of Aria talks Atlas at the St. Regis

Seasonal American restaurant targets Winter opening in the Buckhead

Walking through the construction site at the St. Regis Atlanta—a mess of concrete and dust that will soon be transformed into upscale American restaurant Atlas—you can tell consulting chef and restaurateur Gerry Klaskala is excited. He practically skips around the room, painting a vivid picture of the space, which he describes as having a modern country club vibe.

“The vision is to make the restaurant feel as distant as possible from the St. Regis,” said Klaskala today at the Bisnow Restaurant Development Conference at the Ritz-Carlton Buckhead, mindful of the difference between a hotel restaurant and a restaurant in a hotel.

The last time he opened a restaurant was nearly fifteen years ago. The founder of Aria and Canoe hadn't been looking to open a new spot, but when the Tavistock Group—a private investment firm—contacted him, the opportunity felt right, he says. Also relevant: He has a whopping \$5 million in funding, as noted in a May press release.

Klaskala is consulting on every aspect of Atlas, from the menu and staff to the layout and decor. He's looking to hire a chef de cuisine and is talking to a Holeman & Finch veteran about possibly managing the bar program. Kathryn King of Aria will lead the way for Atlas' pastry program.



The cuisine will be American with seasonal and local ingredients. And while Klaskala says Atlas will definitely serve a good hamburger, chicken, and lamb, the menu will also feature some more unique, playful options. “We're looking back in history for [dishes with] a sense of Americana and then reimagining them,” he says. “We'll take lobster thermidor, for example, and see how we can reimagine it.”

The drinks will be classic American, “but we'll trick 'em,” Klaskala says. Expect a different take on the Old Fashioned, the Manhattan, and the Mint Julep.

Located on the second floor of the St. Regis, across from the hotel bar, the space will be bordered by one-inch-thick emerald green glass with a thick pine door. A library lounge will have a marble fireplace, eclectic furniture, and books. The second lounge—with wait service—will be small, with six stools at the bar made of walnut and polished brass. Glass shelves holding liquor bottles will travel up the column behind it. Nearby, a giant glass box will display bourbons, scotches, cognacs, and ports. The Atlas will also have a patio garden with a view of Buckhead's skyline.

Customers will be able to book a fourteen-seat chef's table that has a fireplace and audio-visual capabilities for special occasions. To reach it, you have to walk through the kitchen.

“It's a hip space. It's very fearlessly American,” Klaskala says.