

## 21ST CENTURY SOUTHERN

BY BRET LOVE

See how four Atlanta chefs are reinventing classic southern cuisine, turning even the most down-home dishes into something sophisticated.



**THE CHEF:** Steven Satterfield of Miller Union (999 Brady Ave; [millerunion.com](http://millerunion.com))

**THE DISH:** Grits

**THE MODERN TWIST:** Miller Union's grits fritters are mixed with country ham and Thomasville Tomme cheese (from Georgia's SweetGrass Dairy Farm), then rolled into a sphere and deep-fried. "I was inspired by traditional Italian arancini—which is prepared with leftover risotto—to create these small bites with flavorful leftover grits. The dish involves a complex preparation," Satterfield acknowledges, "each fritter is stuffed individually with creamy cheese." The result is a unique, forward-thinking appetizer that is perfectly attuned to traditional Southern tastes.



**THE CHEF:** Marc Taft of Chicken & the Egg (800 Whitlock Ave; 678-388-8813)

**THE DISH:** Chicken + Dumplings

**THE MODERN TWIST:** Taft admits that updating this classic Southern dish was daunting because "everyone in the South grew up eating [it] and had a preconceived notion of what [it] should taste like. I started by using a sous-vide chicken breast and heirloom baby carrots, then added cippolini onions. Chef Joe Ramaglia and I both have backgrounds in Italian cooking, so we used gnocchi for the dumplings. We finished it off with a chicken velouté. Like the original, it's comforting and simple while being more composed." In short, it's like mama used to make, only much, much better.



**THE CHEF:** Jay Swift of 4th & Swift (621 North Ave NE; [4thandswift.com](http://4thandswift.com))

**THE DISH:** Pork Rinds

**THE MODERN TWIST:** Swift takes pork rinds from trashy to flashy with his Three Little Piggies dish, which includes locally sourced Berkshire Loin, Cotachino and Chicharrón "popcorn" over grits and wilted greens. "We're always experimenting with different charcuterie techniques," Swift says. "This dish has ground pork, fried pork skin and the loin, which tastes so good marinated in garlic and oil and slow-cooked over our wood fire." Served with creamy grits, the entrée offers a dazzling mixture of flavors and textures.



**THE CHEF:** Cynthia Wong of Empire State South (999 Peachtree St; [empirestatesouth.com](http://empirestatesouth.com))

**THE DISH:** Peach Preserves

**THE MODERN TWIST:** Southerners have preserved peaches since before the Civil War, but you can bet our 19th century forefathers never imagined Wong's Double Peach Float, featuring peach plum moonshine and peach sorbet. "I like the old Southern way of saving all your scraps and making the most of everything," the 2011 James Beard Award nominee says. "We get local Pearson peaches, then do an old-fashioned fermentation method. After you get to the point where it's mildly alcoholic, we add soda water and peach sorbet to make a float." This dessert is fun, fresh and contemporary while kicking it old school.

### Get the original:

#### GRITS

Flying Biscuit Cafe  
multiple locations, [flyingbiscuit.com](http://flyingbiscuit.com)



#### CHICKEN & DUMPLINGS

Mary Mac's Tea Room  
224 Ponce De Leon Ave NE, 404-876-1800; [marymacs.com](http://marymacs.com)



#### PORK RINDS

Euclid Ave Yacht Club  
1136 Euclid Ave NE, 404-688-2582; [theeayc.com](http://theeayc.com)



#### PEACH PRESERVES

Grant Park Farmers Market  
600 Cherokee Ave, Sundays through November; [grantparkmarket.org](http://grantparkmarket.org)

