



Bistro Niko

Eat in Splendor

Beauty may be in the eye of the beholder. But if, after stepping into certain Atlanta restaurants, the view doesn't make you gasp in wonder, then you'd best get your eyes checked. These visual stunners serve up a feast for all the senses, since the food is as impressive as the design. That's something to sink your teeth into. Keep reading: From inspired renovations to new constructions, these are the 12 most striking places to eat in town. **BY HOPE S. PHILBRICK**

If there's one go-to guy that restaurateurs rely on to create eye-popping style, it's Bill Johnson. Odds are that you're already acquainted with his work: He and his team members at The Johnson Studio are the creative architect and design force behind several of Atlanta's most popular restaurants.

Design work may be fun, but that doesn't mean it's easy. "Restaurants are really very complicated buildings," says Johnson. "It's a

little manufacturing facility coupled with what should be a really beautiful, unique and even maybe theatrical public space. Trying to get those two concepts enmeshed in one can be interesting and challenging. I've been doing this for over 25 years and I still learn something every day."

One characteristic common to all Johnson designs is warmth since he strives to create spaces that feel inviting, comfortable and



Peasant Bistro

welcoming. "Hopefully at a restaurant that I've designed you'll walk in and feel really good," he says.

One of Johnson Studio's newest additions to Atlanta's dining scene is **Bistro Niko** (3344 Peachtree Rd., 404-261-6456), a member of the Buckhead Life Restaurant Group. The French bistro-style restaurant "is warm, casual, very versatile and a lot of fun," says Johnson. The space grabs attention from its polished wood

(TOP) COURTESY BUCKHEAD LIFE RESTAURANT GROUP; (BOTTOM) COURTESY PEASANT BISTRO

