

local flavor



GALLEY *and* GARDEN

CHEF JAMES BOYCE'S FUSION OF FRENCH AND AMERICAN COOKING CREATES A PHENOMENAL DINING EXPERIENCE IN THE HEART OF THE MAGIC CITY.

From strawberries in the spring to Gulf seafood in the summer, eating in-season in Alabama is a delight. At Galley and Garden in Birmingham, Chef James Boyce turns to seasonal and local ingredients for his masterful French-American cuisine.

Launching his career in New York, Boyce attended the Culinary Institute of America. While in the city, he worked at Le Cirque, honing his skills with the help of renowned chef Daniel Boulud.



"Daniel was a pioneer in New York culinary," says Boyce. "While he was there, Le Cirque was catapulted, becoming one of the top restaurants in America. I still follow what he taught me."

In 1990, Boyce departed for Arizona to work at The Phoenician. There he was nominated for Best Chef of the Southwest by the James Beard Foundation, and was later declared Top Toque at Loews Coronado Bay Resort in San Diego.

TEXT BY THOMAS M. LITTLE | PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHEN DEVRIES



After a string of accolades, Boyce found himself in Alabama and soon realized the next phase of his career. "Visiting Huntsville led to a great opportunity," he says. "I was in town for a catering job and was inspired by the very open market." With his own company, Boyce Restaurant Concepts, the chef opened Cotton Row, Pane e Vino, and Commerce Kitchen in the Rocket City.

In Birmingham, Ed Hardin of Veranda on Highland approached Boyce and his wife, Suzan, about his historic downtown venue. They took a keen interest in the location and partnered with Hardin on a new venture, making Galley and Garden Boyce's first foray into Birmingham's rising gourmet scene. "In Birmingham, we're in a high-culinary neighborhood," says Boyce. "You have to be spot-on around here."

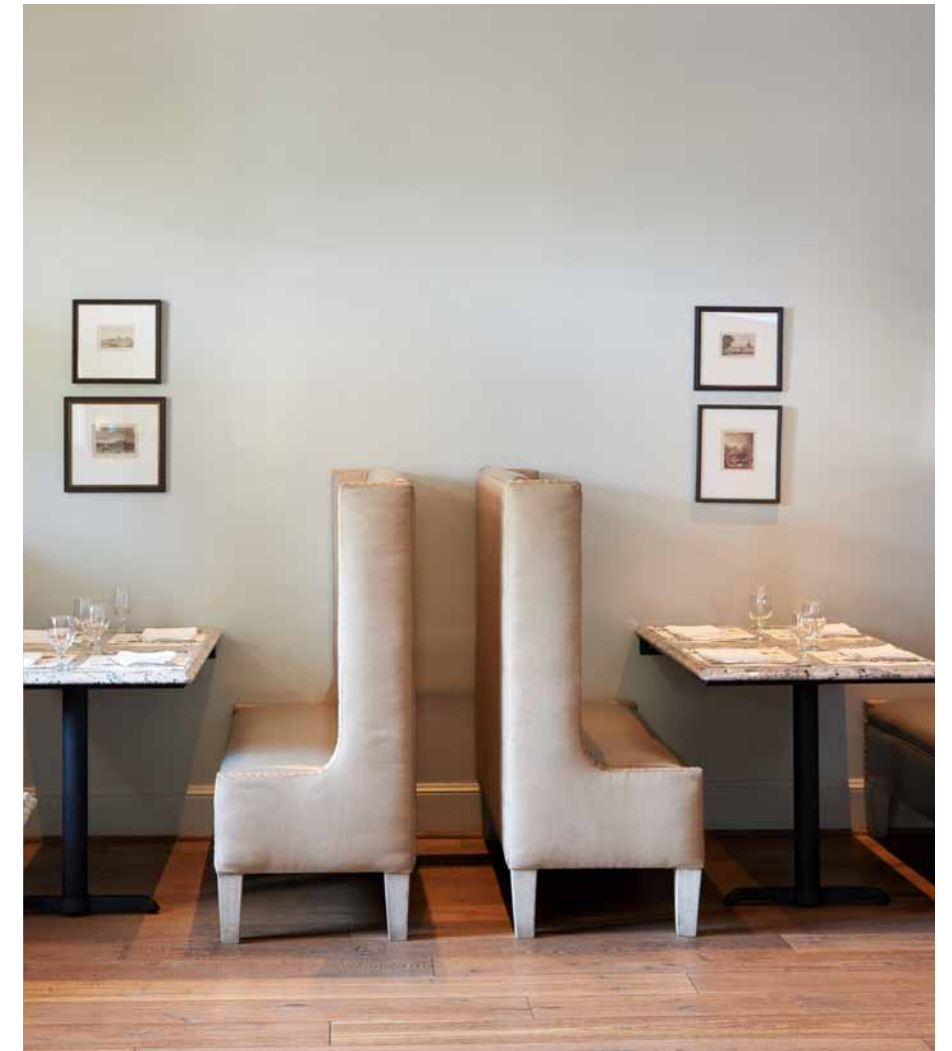
Renovations began in 2014, restoring the former Merritt House on Highland Avenue. "It's an older building, so it needed some nurturing," says Boyce. "We had to revive the historical details. The idea was to make it feel open and light." The redesign allowed Boyce and company to create an aesthetic flow between the kitchen and garden. A wall of windows allows guests to watch the chefs in action, while wide doorways and light colors give the interior an airy quality.

On the patio, a welcome summer breeze passes through the house's four grand pillars. The restaurant's own garden adds a touch of green to the outdoor dining space, and the long dining table is perfect for a meal in the shade. Inside or out, the service is top-notch, as the attentive and knowledgeable staff receive extensive training. "Everyone takes great pride in their work here," says Boyce.

Galley and Garden's dynamic menu changes with the seasons, taking advantage of local farmers and markets. While guests can always expect mainstays like red snapper, slow-braised short rib, and the popular pork belly flatbread, the entrées change based on what comes through the galley. "It's really beyond seasonal," says Boyce. "What we have to work with can vary from day to day. It keeps us thinking and adapting in the kitchen."

In the heat of the summer, the chefs anticipate the arrival of field peas, hog, peaches, and shrimp. "Of course, our fish come fresh from the Gulf," says Boyce. "Birmingham is a great location. It's amazing what you can get around here."

The Gulf's bounty varies with the change in water temperature, so as oysters fade from the menu, hearty fish appear. "Triggerfish is in season," says Boyce, recalling a favorite dish. "It has a great flavor and reminds



THROUGH A WALL OF WINDOWS, GUESTS CAN WATCH THE CHEFS WORKING THEIR MAGIC IN THE KITCHEN AS THEY PREPARE THE MENU'S CULINARY MASTERPIECES.



THE RESTAURANT'S OPEN LAYOUT AND BRIGHT, AIRY FEEL ALLOWS GUESTS TO RELAX AND ENJOY WHILE SAVORING CHEF BOYCE'S SEASONAL DELICACIES.

AT GALLEY AND GARDEN'S WHITE MARBLE BAR, THE BARMASTER TEMPTS GUESTS WITH INNOVATIVE, THIRST-QUENCHING COCKTAILS AND A FINE SELECTION OF WINES FROM AROUND THE WORLD.

me of the European John Dory, so there are fond memories of travel tied in to the meal.”

Chef Boyce’s fusion of French and American cooking is apparent in items like the Hereford Prime New York Strip. Taking the staple steak and potatoes far beyond the ordinary, the tremendous cut of premium beef is served with creamy pommes aligot and Bordelaise sauce, flanked by mushrooms, greens, and carrots.

Guests can also enjoy an inspired cocktail from the restaurant’s white marble bar. The barmaster’s offerings include the heat-quenching Piña Agave and the Honey Rye, a subtly sweet take on the classic Old Fashioned. Galley and Garden also keeps an impressive stock of fine wines from around the world, including a selection of sherry and port ideal for dessert.

Beyond the drinks, the dessert menu features bread pudding, sourdough beignets, and homemade ice cream, among

other treats. The crème brûlée hides a fantastic Madagascar vanilla bean custard under its caramel shell. It pairs wonderfully with Chef Boyce’s own coffee blend, served in a French press.

While every table receives excellent service in a comfortable atmosphere, Galley and Garden offers several private dining options. The house features a parlor and great room for events, with seating for 20 to 80 guests. For more intimate occasions, the wine room accommodates eight in a secluded redwood dining space.

Whether dining in a private parlor, sipping mimosas at Sunday brunch, or taking in live music on the patio, guests at Galley and Garden can expect a phenomenal experience in the heart of the Magic City. While the menu may change with time, excellence is always in season.

