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contributors



An “energetic photographic circus” has been a phrase used to describe **MIKE COOKE**’s photo shoots. The 22-year-old Atlanta native walks tall and carries a big camera, traveling from coast to coast and, most recently, to London, shooting photos that are nothing short of breathtaking. Deeply invested in the emotional as well as the visual content his photos convey, Cooke has a love for shooting all things whimsical and beautiful. In this issue, he captured his fellow SCAD-Atlanta classmates wearing and showcasing their designs in “High Class,” and he scoured the nightlife scene for three of the city’s best mixologists and their summer drink picks.

For this month’s issue, contributing editor **EMILY L. FOLEY** catches up with former teen dreams Mark-Paul Gosselaar and Brekin Meyer, now all grown up and starring in the new legal drama *Franklin & Bash*, as well as comedienne Kathy Griffin. She also shares the 411 on this month’s Beauty Shopper, Holli Hines Easton, reveals buzz-worthy Atlanta happenings in the “TEN” column, and checks out Completely Bare, Cindy Barshop’s chic waxing salon at the Loews Atlanta Hotel.



Atlanta native **BRET LOVE** has been covering arts, entertainment, restaurants and travel for 18 years, interviewing everyone from presidents and mayors to rock and movie stars for publications such as AirTran’s *Go*, Amtrak’s *Arrive*, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, *Destination Marriott* and *Rolling Stone*. In addition to his award-winning freelance work, he is also music editor of *Georgia Music* magazine and editor-in-chief of *Green Global Travel*. In this issue, Love sat down with Atlanta-based Jesse Smith to learn more about his band, Gentleman Jesse & His Men.



SARA HANNA’s freelance photography exhibits her natural instinct for capturing the emotions of meaningful moments, from portraits and event coverage for *JEZEBEL* to family portraiture for private clients. Hanna’s extensive travels across five continents and enjoyment of nature and fitness have instilled in her an intimate understanding and appreciation of the outdoors and the human form. See Hanna’s imagery in this issue’s “Beauty Shopper” column and Escorpion review, and view her photography portfolio online at sarahanna.com.

Knowing why her favorite chocolate chip cookies are bad for her and how to redo your summer barbecue (as she examines in this issue) are topics that have always fascinated **RACHEL NALL**. That’s why she turns her freelance writing and editing focus on health and wellness. Her articles have appeared in more than 150 health care publications across the country. When she’s not researching the latest health issues, she loves traveling, reading and perusing shopping sites.



Hailing from the South, **NATE CHAPNICK** has tested hundreds of cars and SUVs throughout his career covering the automotive industry. Chapnick graduated magna cum laude from Georgetown University and currently travels the world to find the best products for the modern man. Chapnick’s work also can be seen on yahoo.com, forbesautos.com, forbeslife.com, msn.com, edmunds.com, and in the *US Airways* and *America West* in-flight magazines. Check out the Auto section for his review of the Ferrari California.



Atlanta native **SARAH GLEIM** is an award-winning writer and editor. After working for almost 10 years as a magazine staff editor, she returned to school to study culinary arts so she could combine her two biggest passions: food and writing. Now she is an American Culinary Federation Certified Culinarian and has been covering the Atlanta dining scene for nearly five years. When she’s not writing about food, she’s usually dining at some of her favorite Atlanta restaurants. In this issue, Gleim contributes to our “100 Best Restaurants” feature.



DANA HAZELS SEITH is an award-winning (Emmy, National Headliner, duPont and Peabody) Atlanta-based journalist who contributed her review of Riccardo Ullio’s newly opened Escorpion. She is a former CNN producer and *DailyCandy* Atlanta editor. In addition to writing for *JEZEBEL*, Hazels Seith is the Atlanta community manager at MSN’s Postbox and the founder of *DanaPop*, a lifestyle and culture blog. She also writes for various publications throughout the Southeast.



Halibut with smoked jalapeño broth and oven-dried tomatoes



Cowhide chairs in the secondary dining area



Tuna ceviche with watermelon, serrano peppers and smoked sea salt

The Comeback Kid

Riccardo Ullio brings his take on the Mexican cantina to Midtown.

The first week Escorpion opened, a summer storm brought down the power of the Midtown neighborhood in which it's situated. Owner Riccardo Ullio kept the doors open and the drinks flowing; with no electricity to operate a kitchen, all that could be served were chips and salsa. Ullio jokes that the bartenders were mixing drinks in the dark but muses on just how beautiful the restaurant looked by candlelight.

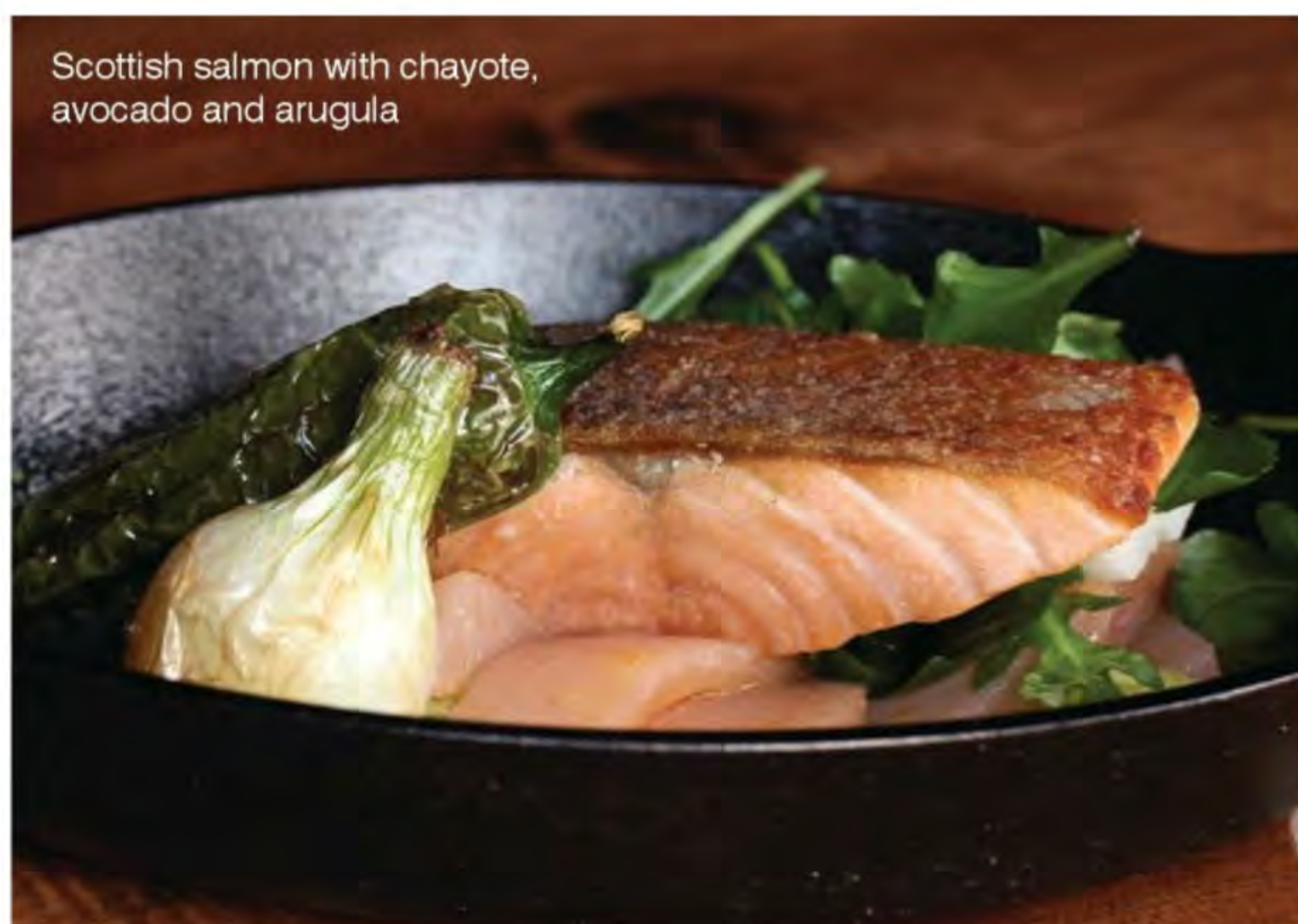
One can imagine the space with that dim, flickering light adding a layer of ambience that cannot be purchased. The candlelight enhancing the Day of the Dead-inspired restaurant, reminiscent of Robert Rodriguez's *El Mariachi*, with the sexy grit of the Southwest and Mexico, must have lent a dangerous, desert vibe. Ullio's latest inception, Escorpion, his foray into a Mexican cantina concept, strays from his traditional Italian roots, though familiarity abounds. Elements of Ullio's seven restaurants arrive in some fashion—from Lupe as the culinary inspiration to the barstools reupholstered in cowhide from Beleza to the gusto of Cuerno—all are given a second life.

In 2000, Ullio burst on the scene with his Inman Park hits, Sotto Sotto and Fritti, and later that decade came his Midtown misses: the aforementioned Beleza, Cuerno and Lupe, respectively. Having learned from those missteps, Escorpion is decidedly casual both in design and on the plate, but there is a level of refinement that's expected with a U Restaurant, and Escorpion delivers.

The highlights of the kitchen, led by Executive Chef Edgar Cruz, are the ceviche and small plates, worthy of a few orders. Particularly good are the octopus and tuna ceviches, where Cruz plays around with fruit flavors like watermelon and grapefruit. The tacos are nice, especially the very simple and surprisingly light fried shrimp. Comfort food comes from the small plates section in Sous Chef Maria Palma's family recipe for pork tama-



Scottish salmon with chayote, avocado and arugula



Q&A with Riccardo Ullio

Topics: Chaos theory and global inspiration



As someone who owns several restaurants in the city, what do you think are the elements of a successful operation?

I've been reading a bit about chaos theory, and I think it's very interesting because one of the elements is how to solve multiple differential equations that do not have any answers to them. I sort of began to formulate my [take on] the restaurant business based on these theories. One thing about the chaos theory that's interesting is that very small starting parameters can make a huge difference down the road that are sometimes unpredictable. In the end, there are different things that play into the success of a restaurant: location, service... and expectations.

It sounds subjective, to your point, that there's a huge gray area.

There is. Somebody might open up some little shack where the food is pretty good and there are no expectations, and everybody loves it, and it becomes the hot thing in town. People are very much influenced by their preconceptions and expectations.

You're Italian and grew up both in Italy and Atlanta. Where is this Mexican influence coming from?

Before Cuerno [Ullio's now defunct Midtown tapas restaurant], I just liked Spanish food. I like to travel; I've been to Spain a lot. I like the culture and thought it was an interesting thing to do. For me, it's more of a question of wanting to create and do something new and different. And I've been eating Mexican food for a long time. All the guys who work in my kitchens cook Mexican food for their families.



Escorpion's desert-inspired dining room

les that are covered in an excellent and complex green mole. The halibut with jalapeño broth is a standout main course, and the traditional dulce de leche cake is an optimal ending.

A cantina is not worth its salt without a mention of tequila. Rest assured that Ullio has hired the very best in head mixologist Adam Fox (previously of the Flat Iron Lounge in NYC), who knows a thing or two about a quality pour. Drinks contain 100-percent agave, meaning there are zero fillers, and the *agave al tiempo* (loosely, the tequila of the season) list is a great place to start. Most of the cocktails on the menu are garnished with herbs and use herb infusions—certainly not a new trend, but one that's appreciated and interesting given this context.

The opening of Escorpion brings a new area of the neighborhood to conquer, a fresh concept and bold flavor. It's a comeback indeed for Ullio, and you can bet, in this desert setting, he won't be backing down. —DANA HAZELS SEITH

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