

# Atlanta restaurant makes a layover worth it

**One Flew South at Hartsfield Jackson airport, a prime sushi bar and restaurant, satisfies pork-belly lust.**

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I did something I never thought I'd do when I made a plane reservation recently.

I arranged a longer layover. In Atlanta.

While even I questioned my sanity for a minute, there was a method to this madness. Hartsfield Jackson Atlanta International Airport has gotten a little better for eaters in the last couple of years. Maybe even a lot better.

There was a time when all plane tickets came with a meal. Remember the plastic plate with the cunning little compartments? Remember looking at the clouds while gumming broccoli that had been steamed into whimpering submission?

OK, maybe it's not such a good memory.

But these days, you have little hope of a meal once the plane takes off unless you're a clever packer. On the ground, you're a captive of food courts, \$6 bottles of soda and that Cinabon smell.

Still, I am a determined food traveler. I've panted through airport barbecue explorations in Dallas and Memphis, Tenn. (In Memphis, I'll take Interstate over Corky's, hands down.) I've navigated ground transportation to get to Todd English's Figs at LaGuardia (decent fancy-pants pizza) and swapped tips on the superiority of Chicago's Midway (with Pot Belly's) over O'Hare.

But one airport experience had so far slipped from my grasp: One Flew South at Hartsfield Jackson in Atlanta. An actual airport restaurant. With an actual chef, the wonderfully named Duane Nutter.

Usually, when passing through Atlanta - and we all do, eventually - I

have only a short stop, maybe a quick train ride from Concourse C to A. There is just enough time to stop at Paschal's, the airport-concession version of the storied Atlanta soul food restaurant.

That is not a bad thing. As airport food goes, I like Paschal's (pronounced PASS-kells). Soul food adapts better than most cuisines to the steam-table treatment, and the nice ladies behind the counter usually call me "baby" at least once.

The baked chicken and meat loaf are satisfying, but I usually skip them and go with a vegetable plate of moist, buttery cornbread dressing topped with gravy, collards, black-eyed peas

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and very candied yams. Compared to another pack of Delta's Biscoff cookies, that is hungry-traveler manna.

But what I really wanted was a layover long enough to take the train all the way to Concourse E, for One Flew South.

Nutter has been racking up accolades for his prime sushi bar and restaurant, which has been singled out for praise everywhere from Conde Nast Traveler to Garden & Gun. When I saw the menu included a pulled duck-confit sandwich, Benton's bacon BLT, Carolina trout and - cue the violins - several manifestations of pork belly, I knew I had to bite the bullet train and find a way.

On a recent trip back from D.C., I had my chance. My plane got in at 11 a.m. and I had picked a connector that didn't board until 12:50. Plenty of time.

At 11:15, I reached the door in the gleaming halls of the inter-

national concourse, where Euro-trotters get live piano music and a wine bar in addition to the usual McDonald's and Arby's.

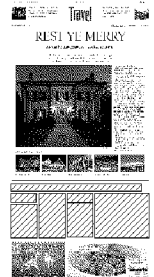
Too bad the door didn't open until noon. So much for my carefully laid plans.

But pork-belly lust knows no obstacles. When another determined food traveler showed up at 11:30, we double-teamed the manager and begged pathetically until they agreed to open 15 minutes early. There's one example of why locally owned restaurants have a place in airports: What chain restaurant would bend those rules?

The Atlanta architecture firm Johnson Studio, which designed Charlotte's Vivace and BLT Steak, was responsible for the look of this place. There's nothing generic about it. Slats of heart pine cover the windows and gird the ceiling and floor. Tables and bars are topped with indigenous Cherokee pink marble. Ultramodern, white leather chairs cup your weary backside. Add the room-length photographic mural of a lush green forest and the effect is literally oasis.

I started with sushi, which is fitting for an airport. If you want fresh fish in America, don't look to ports, look to air transportation. My starter, two pieces of raw-scallop nigiri, was wonderfully sweet and clean-tasting.

Then I turned to Nutter's Thyme-Roasted Pork Belly, served on pureed parsnips with black-eyed pea and arugula salad and blackberry-on-



ion marmalade. It was just the way pork belly should be and too often isn't: fork-tender inside, crisped on the outside.

I was cutting it close enough on time that I decided to get dessert to go. Warm chocolate chip cookies and ice cream sounded tempting but not travel-proof. I went with the Pineapple "Not" Upside Down Cake - grilled pumpkin bread, bourbon-braised pineapple and a generous topping of vanilla-flavored fluffy cream.

I held out on opening the dessert until we were airborne and headed for Charlotte. I took a tender, not-too-sweet bite and looked out at the clouds.

It wasn't free, but it beat the

stuffing out of mushy broccoli.

## If you're going

Paschal's Soul Food counters are located in concourses A and C and in the atrium at Hartsfield Jackson Atlanta International Airport. One Flew South is in Concourse E. Hours: Noon to 10 p.m. If you have a tight layover, call ahead and they'll pack anything on the menu to go: 404-816-3464. Prices range from \$8 to \$16 for appetizer, \$9 to \$16 for salads or sandwiches, \$18 to \$32 for entrees, \$10 to \$16 for sushi.

Details: [www.oneflewsouthatl.com](http://www.oneflewsouthatl.com)



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**One Flew South's design is both cool and hip, with a forest-glade theme that can make even an airport feel relaxing.**