

[LOCALLY LINKED]

Watkinsville's CHOPS & HOPS keeps community at its center

Quality food and drink are the main event at Chops & Hops, but the generous helping of Southern hospitality served up with every meal truly sets this neighborhood restaurant apart, says Mellony Adkins.

She and husband Stephen own the restaurant that has been a part of downtown Watkinsville's dining scene since 2010. The Walton Gas customers are committed to the historic area.

"We've stayed here because we love this community and believe in it," she said.

BITES AND BEVERAGES

A dining destination for visitors, pre-game stop for Bulldogs fans and an everyday favorite with locals, Chops & Hops is known for its hand-crafted, locally sourced and seasonal dishes served for lunch and dinner.

"We work with farmers from the area to curate our menu," Adkins said. Freshly picked vegetables often dictate what will be on the menu that day. "Our talented chef is always being challenged to create new dishes from what our farmers bring us."

A rotating seasonal menu also features locally sourced lamb, bison and beef. To highlight the community connection, suppliers get to name the burgers made from their beef.

True to the "chops" in its name, hand-cut steaks and pork chops are favored entrees. Seafood is also a specialty, with cast iron-seared Lemon Garlic Trout being especially popular.

Beverages share equal billing with plated fare. Cocktails and mocktails flavored with raspberries, peaches, blueberries and strawberries are the specialty of head bartender Elizabeth Buck. The drink lineup also includes an impressive selection of local craft beers — the "hops" connection — as well as whiskey, scotch and wine.

No matter what the order, every dining experience at Chops & Hops includes the restaurant's distinctive laid-back, friendly standard of service.

"We make customers feel like family," Adkins said. "Our regulars know the servers by name."



Located at 2 South Main Street in Watkinsville, Chops & Hops is open Monday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Visit their website at chopsandhops.com.

Walton Gas customers Stephen and Mellony Adkins are the team behind family-owned Chops & Hops, a popular restaurant in Watkinsville's redeveloped downtown.

Grilled peach & burrata salad

Sweet, fresh and full of summer flavor, this grilled peach & burrata salad is perfect for warm evenings and backyard dinners. Juicy peaches paired with creamy burrata create an easy dish that feels both light and refreshing.

INGREDIENTS

3 Georgia-grown peaches, halved and pitted
1 tablespoon olive oil
4 cups arugula or mixed greens
1 ball burrata cheese
1/4 cup chopped Georgia pecans or walnuts
Fresh basil leaves
Balsamic glaze
Salt and pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS

Brush peach halves lightly with olive oil and place on a natural gas grill for 2–3 minutes per side until grill marks appear and peaches begin to soften. Arrange greens on a serving platter and top with grilled peaches, burrata, nuts and basil. Drizzle with balsamic glaze and season with salt and pepper. Serve immediately and enjoy a fresh taste of summer.



SMART MOVES

Home technology upgrades make life easier

As smart home features make everyday life increasingly more convenient and efficient, requests for tech enhancements are surging, reports EMC Security, a Georgia company better known for its home security systems and cameras.

“Local homeowners are now asking for systems that do more than automate a few devices,” says Natalie Stanley, EMC Security’s brand manager. “They want connected experiences that simplify daily life, protect the home, reduce waste and adapt naturally to the way people live.”

She notes these home technology trends are the year’s hottest:

UNIFIED CONTROL

Homeowners are opting for smart home automation, which can allow multiple devices to work together.

“Instead of juggling a bunch of different apps, users want one intelligent system that brings everything together — security, energy, lighting, climate and audio,” Stanley said.

When connected through one system, smart home features can all be managed from a single mobile app, giving homeowners greater control whether they are at work, running errands or away for the weekend.

“For example, when a homeowner locks the door to leave for the day, the system can automatically arm, adjust the thermostat, turn off selected lights and even shut off smart outlets connected to devices like an iron,” she said.

ENERGY MANAGEMENT

Smart thermostats are the most popular single feature for home upgrades. A step beyond programmable thermostats that offer simple automation, smart thermostats offer intelligent energy management.

Smart thermostats allow homeowners to adjust temperatures remotely, create automatic schedules and reduce energy use when no one is home. These devices can also monitor and optimize electricity use.

“During Georgia summers, many families appreciate the convenience of controlling their home’s temperature directly from their phone while also helping manage monthly utility costs,” Stanley said.

GET SMART

Learn how smart home technology can help make your home more comfortable, efficient and connected. Call EMC Security at **770-963-0305** or visit **emcsecurity.com**.



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