



A Feast FOR THE Senses – FROM PROCESS TO PERFECTION

WALTER AND SUSIE ALTMAN OFFER A
EUROPEAN APPROACH TO DINING AND
RETAIL AT A + B, ETC. IN HAHIRA

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Gazing upon one of Susie Altman's perfectly magnificent macarons, it's easy to focus on the finished product and to not consider the challenging process of creation. Likewise, encountering the luxurious beauty A + B, etc. presents when you walk in the front door today, it's almost impossible to recall the rancid ruins of the grocery store that once stood there on Main Street. A + B, etc. represents a complete transformation, the result of laborious and intense vision – a dream really – that came from Susie and husband Walter's desire to offer their hometown area a European approach to dining and retail.

As avid sojourners to Europe, Walter and Susie have enjoyed French and Italian culture for well over a decade. Not surpris-



A glimpse inside the boutique side of A + B, etc. shows the latest French fashions. A + B, etc. owner and architect Walter Altman designed the boutique and restaurant from the ground up. They also offer a fine dining experience amid chandeliers with French cuisine served on bone china.



Susie Altman prepares macarons in the kitchen of A + B, etc., a French bistro and retail store in Hahira, Ga.



Susie sells her macaroons packaged for delivery in addition to in-store displays

ingly, Walter knew he wanted to be an architect from the age of 12. He has always enjoyed painting and working with different mediums, and his original paintings--as well as prints of his landscapes and street scenes--are available in the shop. When a particular setting catches his eye, he often sets up his easel and paints *mise-en-scene*, from life. Not one to settle for the easily available, he prefers to create his own colors by combining pigments with different bases or binders to generate oil paints, water colors, or acrylics. He visits Zecchi in Florence and Sennelier in Paris for their outstanding selections. When Walter shared his inspiration to set up business in Hahira and create this new space, Susie was on board.

In fact, Susie is not shy about accepting a challenge; case in

point, the elusive confection – the macaron. A pharmacist, Susie knew that if she could compound prescriptions, she could master the macaron. After experimenting with recipes, she ultimately went in favor of the French method, not weighing the ingredients such as almond flour, sugar, and egg whites. She has mastered the delicate meringue texture and adapts her own basic recipe for special requests. Just this year she has custom made macarons to order in coordinated hues for holidays, showers, birthdays, and other celebrations. One secret she can share about these confections: the kitchen should be cool for them to set properly. She laughs that “anyone who enters the kitchen during macaron making might want to wear a sweater!”

Speaking of the beautiful chef’s kitchen, A + B, etc. has become



Susie Altman takes pride in serving guests the macaron recipe she learned to master over time.



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known for their reservations-only dining experiences. Guests can select from a limited menu in advance and book a table for their number of guests – large or small. Between their beautiful dining room and kitchen, a butler’s pantry replete with exquisite bone china and crystal stemware awaits being plating and filled. Their wine selections have been chosen from first-hand visits to the vineyard. Susie notes, “Learning about wine is the best part of my job!” They feature an exclusive list from their stay at Chez le Fatien in Beaune, France. With the vintner, who owns three vineyards, they ordered 12 cases after a private cellar tour and barrel tasting. One, the Gevry-Chambertin, has enjoyed praise in upscale press reviews.

Just recently, the chefs at A + B, etc. have begun special bistro openings to the public, and even made take-out window boxed lunches of crepes, burgers, fish tacos, and their signature homemade ice creams. Diners could enjoy the parlor tables at the recently installed Petanque court (rules are posted!) or take their meals with them. Executive Chef Nicholas Ekblaw and Executive Sous Chef Matthew Russ enjoy sharing their passion for healthy, classic, and beautifully prepared dishes with guests who come from near and far and may want to try something new, in addition to the classic.

Married for just over 20 years, Walter and Susie Altman are delighted with their venture, and even plan to make downtown Hahira their home, as they renovate the recently acquired three-story Odom building downtown. Speaking in synch with the architect’s vision, Susie notes, “We are carefully peeling back the layers of recent history to reveal the original structure and finishes of this historical building. We can hardly wait to call the third floor our new home!” The first and second floors may house some bistro or coffee shop style dining as well as retail selections.

One thing is certain about the Altmans: they enjoy the creative process and plan for perfection. If you haven’t visited A + B, etc., you need to do so soon. Treat yourself to a macaron, experience perfect, and see what everyone is talking about!