

# BlackBook

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## Blueprint

### Word of Mouf

Ludacris officially becomes a quadruple threat with **Straits Atlanta**, his Deep South-meets-Singaporean eatery opening this month. BY UNA LAMARCHE



**MONEY MAKERS**  
[from left] Yeo and Bridges; a rendering of Straits Atlanta.

**Motive:** Straits began as a real estate deal. Bridges purchased the building hoping to eventually use it to benefit the Ludacris Foundation, which helps disadvantaged youth. He then met Yeo, who is also devoted to charity work, and learned that he was a restaurateur. "That's funny," Bridges remembers saying. "I just bought a building that used to be a restaurant." After sampling the food at Straits San Francisco, Bridges was determined to merge Yeo's culinary skills with his hometown's Southern cooking. "I knew this was what Atlanta needed," says Bridges. "It's something new." Yeo, for his part, was enticed by Bridges' interest and the potential of expanding his brand outside of California (there are currently Straits locations in San Francisco, Burlingame, and San Jose).

#### PROJECT: STRAITS ATLANTA

**Director/Producer:** Chef and owner Chris Yeo (a hairstylist-turned-restaurant-maguf who now owns three Straits locations in California) and Grammy-winning rapper, actor, and philanthropist Chris "Ludacris" Bridges.

**Team:** The Johnson Studio, the architect and design firm behind Kevin Rathbun Steakhouse in Atlanta and Fearing's in Dallas (Esquire's reigning "Restaurant of the Year").

**Location:** 793 Juniper Street, a three-story 19th century building in midtown Atlanta, formerly occupied by Spice. Bridges purchased the building last year and has reportedly put over a million dollars into its renovation.

**Design:** Fire and water are the elements at work in the revamped space, aiming for a sexy, minimalist Eastern vibe. Vibrant reds and browns, including dark woods and chocolate brown leather, are the "fire," and as for "water," edge-lit glass shelves with LED lighting will span the wall behind the downstairs bar. The finished space will also include a patio and a private dining room (all the better for Bridges and other celebs to dine away from the watchful eyes of their fans, not to mention TMZ cameras).

**The Crowd:** Energetic, diverse, and local without pretense. Bridges says, "The price point is going to be low. Everyone can eat here." Still, we suspect that some of Yeo's famous followers, such as Dave Chappelle, Lenny Kravitz, and Bill Bellamy, will trek to the A-T-L to sample Straits's new flavors.

**The Menu:** Expect an authentic yet modernized interpretation of Singaporean cuisine (popular dishes include origami sea bass, wok-fired mussels, and banana blossom salad), as well as new creations based on Yeo's specialties but tailored for a distinctly Southern palette. Yeo's philosophy—"Food should be a communal experience"—will be reflected in large (shared) plates that lend a "Southern hospitality," family-style feel.

**The Bottom Line:** A welcome addition to a city whose finest Chinese restaurant is called "Chopstix."

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