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No dire Straits

An exclusive chat with Ludacris on his hot new Asian eatery in Midtown, Straits

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Ludacris sets the Atlanta restaurant scene 'strait' with his new restaurant

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Why just order the food when you can own your own restaurant? Diddy did it with **Justin's** and then Jermaine Dupri followed up with **Cafe Dupri**. Chris "Ludacris" Bridges, or Luda, as we know him, won't be out done on the mic or in the culinary world. His first restaurant venture, **Straits**, is a collaborative effort between himself and master chef/restauranteur Chris Yeo, who masterminded the **Straits** concept of good Singaporean cuisine in a sexy environment in the Bay Area.

In the ATL, things are a little different. Opium, located on the bottom floor of the restaurant, is a baller's hideway where only bottle service will gain you entrance. It even has it own private entrance but you didn't hear that from us. Luda did clarify a few things at his grand opening, though, because we go back like that.

The Accidental Restaurateur: "About a year ago, I came up on a good real estate deal," he explains. "It was already a restaurant [Spice] but I wasn't necessarily trying to get into the restaurant business."

I Changed My Mind: "The foundation dinner [The Ludacris Foundation sponsors an annual fundraising dinner to raise money to aid their charitable efforts to children] of last year came one month after I bought the restaurant. I met this guy named Chris Yeo, who had his own restaurant, and we both had a passion for charity work and giving back to kids. One thing led to another, we became friends. I went to check out his restaurant, which is the original concept for this one, in California. From there, long story short, we brought the concept here."

You like the way I do it: "I was very involved. The menu was pretty much set. I made minor changes as far as like trying to add stuff to the menu, spices. What sets this restaurant apart is the spices and the sauces in my opinion but, as far as the decor and all of these different things and making sure everything is on point, I'm very, very involved."

'What's Your Fantasy?' Menu Item: "My favorite dish on here is called chicken lollipops so that's my fantasy right there."

Keeping Spirits High: "We have specialty drinks. There's one called Kelly's Cocktail. That's really good. I can't tell people the ingredients cause it's a secret but when you're here you got to try that or a Redhead in Bed. Try one of those two."

So Far, So Good: "It's going great. We had a soft opening about [three] weeks ago it's going really, really good. We worked out the kinks to have this grand opening here [where we caught up with him]. I couldn't be happier right now."

Pimping All Over the World: "We are going to take it one step at a time. You got to crawl before you walk but eventually my idea is definitely to have more restaurants."

Straits, www.straitsrestaraunts.com, 793 Juniper Street, NE (corner of 5th and Juniper), 404-877-1283