

BOÎTE

Suited for Stars, and the Star-Struck

By ELISA MALA
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ATLANTA



Erik S. Lesser for The New York Times

SMILE AND SAY 'LUDACRIS' At
Straits Atlanta, patrons can sample an array of Singaporean cuisine or pose with a celebrity owner.

Taking its name from the Singapore Strait, Straits Atlanta is the epicurean brainchild of the hairstylist-turned-chef Chris Yeo and the Grammy-winning rapper and actor Chris Bridges (best known as Ludacris). The restaurant is also a convergence point for stars and admirers who might otherwise never meet — especially those fans who want to meet Mr. Bridges.

“What’s most important is that when I’m here, I greet people and ask them what they like and dislike,” said Mr. Bridges, speaking from the dual-level eatery. (He owns a stake in the restaurant and the building that houses it.)

“Every time we’ve been here, we’ve seen Ludacris,” said Lynn Lilly, 23, a restaurant marketing coordinator, who was making her seventh visit to Straits Atlanta since its April 25 opening.

Under the neon-blue glow of the bar shelves, she sipped cocktails with Jen Dolny, 23, a friend. “It’s drawing the top people in the industry,” Ms. Lilly said.

The question is, which industry? On a recent Monday night, patrons ranged from music business veterans to society mavens.

Thomas Schoborg, the executive chef at the nearby Rosa Mexicano restaurant, sat several seats away from Corinna Allen, a reporter for CBS in Atlanta; Beth Weitzman, the editor of Jezebel

magazine; and Carolyn O’Neil, a former executive producer and senior correspondent at CNN.

Like the clientele of Straits Atlanta, the Singaporean cuisine served here is a hodgepodge, with Chinese, Malay, Indian, Thai and Indonesian influences, though patrons offer other analogies.

“The roti is like crack,” said Camille Wright, 36, the owner of a boutique in nearby Decatur, who was devouring the paper-thin pancakes with friends.

When not posing for admirers wielding camera phones, Mr. Bridges sat at a corner table with Ciara, the R & B singer, and Keshia Knight Pulliam, all grown up since her days playing Rudy, the youngest Huxtable child, on “The Cosby Show.”

The old friends discussed new projects: Ciara — CiCi to her table companions — recently signed with Wilhelmina Models, while Ms. Knight Pulliam will appear in the second season of the TBS comedy “Tyler Perry’s House of Payne.”

Mr. Bridges, who has starred in such films as “Crash” and “Hustle & Flow,” lamented being unable to leave Toronto — even on his days off — while shooting the movie “Max Payne” with Mark Wahlberg.

Mr. Bridges’s favorite item on the menu is the chicken lollipops, though it may soon be upstaged by the Billionaire’s Margarita, a \$50 concoction spiked with Partida Blanco Tequila and aged Grand Marnier.

“This is the best margarita I’ve ever had,” he said, commending Ferdinand Garrido, the restaurant’s bartender.

In a place characterized by topsy-turviness, why can’t a celebrity also be a fan?

Straits Atlanta
793 Juniper Street NE, Atlanta
(404) 877-1283

GETTING IN Reservations recommended but not required.

DRESS CODE Button-down shirts and nonbaggy jeans for men. Baseball caps, no; fedoras, yes. Heels and dresses for women.

SIGNATURE DRINKS Kelly’s Cocktail, \$11 (muddled plums, Ketel One Citroen vodka, lime juice, vanilla moscato), named after Mr. Yeo’s wife, and the house-made Karma’s Ginger Ale, \$3, named after Mr. Bridges’ daughter.