

The Atlanta Journal- Constitution

April 26, 2008

PeachBuzz

Ludacris opens new restaurant with AIDS benefit

By RICHARD L. ELDREDGE | Friday, April 25, 2008, 08:43 PM

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Musician, actor and entrepreneur **Chris Bridges** (who pops up on the young peoples' iPods as rapper **Ludacris**) was beaming Thursday night as he welcomed guests to his latest venture, Straits restaurant at 793 Juniper St. in Midtown.



Special

*AID Atlanta executive director **Tracy Elliott** (from left), actress **Jennifer Holliday**, **Chris Bridges** (aka Ludacris) and chef **Chris Yeo** at the Straits AID Atlanta benefit private dinner Thursday.*

The former site of Spice was acquired by Bridges last year initially as a real estate investment (the reformed crack house fetched \$2.7 million last year in the renovated

neighborhood). But after meeting chef **Chris Yeo** at a Ludacris Foundation benefit here last year and tasting his Singaporean cuisine in his Straits restaurant in San Francisco, Bridges decided to expose folks in his hometown to the Asian flavors.

“The seasoning of the food is what really got me,” Bridges told Buzz, clad in a beautifully tailored dark blue suit and accented with a sparkling diamond stud earring roughly the size of Vinings. “Atlanta is such a great melting pot, but this kind of food was lacking here. But I don’t want people to get things twisted. I originally bought this as a real estate investment. But after meeting Chris, bringing Straits to Atlanta became something I wanted to do. And believe me, whenever I’m in town, I’ll be here eating!”

Yeo told us he’s loved relocating to Atlanta as he and his Left Coast team reassembled here to prep Straits Atlanta.

“I’m really excited about introducing this cuisine to Atlanta,” the fedora-favoring foodie told us.

And the one ingredient Atlantans should try?

“Definitely the Chinese sausage,” he suggested. “It’s sweeter and more caramelized.”

Past the exposed kitchen where the staff was expertly chopping cilantro and steaming rice, Buzz managed to slide past the “Wine Cellar” signage and sneak downstairs to the private Opium Lounge where bottle service will be offered to VIPs.

Light from numerous votive candles danced on the exposed brick wall in the cool basement space. The comfy couches, adorned with gold pillows and seating for 40 could prove quite a draw for Bridges’ countless celebrity friends.

We especially loved the *very private* darkened area, seemingly designed for two pairs of canoodling couples. ...

STAR-STUDED NIGHT

Joining Ludacris at the Straits AID Atlanta benefit private dinner Thursday night: pop star **Fergie**, rapper **Rich Boy**, former “Webster” star **Emmanuel Lewis**, “Dreamgirls” Tony winner **Jennifer Holliday** and former Atlanta Falcon **Jamal Anderson**.