

Shaun Doty returns to the kitchen with The Federal

Chef and restaurateur discusses new restaurant slated to open in Atlanta

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Restaurateur Shaun Doty is returning to his chef roots by converting one of the Bantam & Bidy spaces to The Federal, a restaurant slated to open later this month in Midtown Atlanta, in the shadow of the Federal Reserve building.

Sarah Dorio

For the past four years, Atlanta-based restaurateur Shaun Doty has focused on his four-unit, chicken-oriented diner [Bantam & Bidy](#) and fast-casual chicken concept Chick-a-Biddy.

Now he is returning to his [chef](#) roots by converting one of the Bantam & Bidy spaces to The Federal, a restaurant slated to open later this month in Midtown Atlanta, in the shadow of the Federal Reserve building. The restaurant will have about 50 seats, and an average check of around \$48.

Doty has a long and storied history in the Atlanta restaurant scene, having gotten his start working under legendary chef Günter Seeger at the Ritz-Carlton, Buckhead. After working oversees in Belgium and France, and after stints in other cities, Doty returned to Atlanta and ran restaurants including Mumbo Jumbo, MidCity Cuisine, Table 1280 and Shaun's.

Doty recently discussed his new restaurant, and his motivations for returning to the kitchen, with Nation's Restaurant News.

You're currently managing partner of Little Green Hen Ventures LLC [the parent to Doty's restaurant concepts]. What does that role entail?

I guess I'm chief fire-putter-outer. I do a lot of venue training and staffing. I organize the management; I oversee payroll, insurance, bills, all of that stuff.

I'm repositioning some of my folks to take over those roles. I mean, I'm going to have to remain very engaged, but I have some really bright people working with me, so I'm excited because this is going to give me the opportunity to do some chop-chop work, and that's how I got to where I am.

I've been spending a lot of time in business management. And now I'm going to reengage in the culinary scene and there's going to be trickle-down creativity. There's going to be things that are going to be applicable for the other restaurants.

So will it be both a restaurant and a test kitchen for your other restaurants?

I mean, we're not like Noma. We're not an incubator for ideas. I prefer to think of the job [of a chef] as a craftperson, working with your hands.

My sons, honestly, have never seen me work as a chef. I have two boys — one's 13 and one's 6 — and they were both really young when I founded Bantam & Bidy. Being a chef is an authentic career; being a restaurateur? I mean, what does that mean? "Oh, I fly to San Francisco and I eat at restaurants." Being a chef is like a real job, and I want them to see that because I think it's important.

I respect all the positions in the restaurant — dishwasher, line cook, waiter, chef — they're all very legitimate, valid careers. Unlike a restaurateur, which is kind of a, you know, restaurateurs are kind of hustlers.

I'm in trouble [laughs].

There's tangible gratification in prepping and cooking, you know?

You know me. I'm a really social guy. My customers are my friends for many years. Re-engaging with them is exciting to me. I like having friends and family that I've known for years coming back to the restaurant.

Why did you decide to convert one of your Bantam & Bidy locations to The Federal?

This neighborhood has all these luxury high-rises. It's where The Four Seasons is located. I had this great space, but I was doing, like, diner food — good quality, but it really wasn't what the neighborhood wanted.



The space is built out; it's cute as a button. So I said, "Well, maybe this is the time to get back into the kitchen."

I'm 47 now; I still have some pep in my step. How I achieved the modest amount of success I have achieved has always been by working as a chef, and it was just a serendipitous opportunity to put a chef jacket back on. So from that standpoint, I know that it's going to be a ton of work, but I'm kind of looking forward to it.

Tell me about the new restaurant.

I love Southern cuisine. I love working with local farms and purveyors — of course, we have to say that, right? But it's true. I like American steakhouse culture. I have a fondness for brasseries and bistros, so [The Federal is] a mashup of all of these experiences. I'm going to have menu items that pay homage to the American steakhouse. I'm going to have dishes that are things that I experienced and enjoyed where I used to live in Brussels. We're going to be open breakfast, lunch and dinner, because I think a restaurant should be open all the time; they're community places. I also have a fondness for espresso-bar culture, so that's baked into it also. Does that make any sense?

So it will be a combination of everything you enjoy.

That's right. I'm going to try to engineer it so it's reasonably priced. I have this fondness for daily diners. That's what Bantam & Biddy and Chick-a-Biddy are. I don't want [The Federal] to be an, "Okay, it's my birthday," place. I want it to be an, "It's Wednesday, let's go to dinner there," place.

What kind of food do you plan to serve?

Everything on the menu's going to have some sort of mental souvenir for me. So if I'm doing beef tartare with fries, that's reminiscent of my days living in Belgium. I'm going to serve a pork schnitzel with onion salad because I have a lot of German friends, and we'll go eat at their house. This is something I put on my menu [in the past] on a whim just to please my German friends, and it was really well received.

Tell me about this onion salad.

You take Vidalia onions when they're in season. You grill them until they're a little soft but still crunchy. I mix them with Italian parsley, Parmigiano and roasted peanut oil and chopped peanuts. Mix that all together and then I put that on the schnitzel with a lemon wedge.

Roasted peanut oil? Does that taste like peanuts?

Yeah. It's really savory and yummy. And I'm making a little loup de mer that I'm going to serve with a socca, which is like a chickpea crêpe. I'm going to do all the pastries myself. I have a little bit of pastry experience. I'm not Pierre Hermé, but I can make a pretty good sticky toffee pudding, or classics that are thoughtfully made, and made every day.



What are you going to do for breakfast?

I'm going to do a Texas breakfast that's going to be steak and eggs and Texas Toast, because I grew up in Oklahoma and lived in Texas. I'm going to do a brisket skillet with eggs. But I'm also going to serve raw oats with agave nectar and items like that. I'm going to serve a local yogurt with bee pollen and honey. I keep bees.

Of course you do.

That's going to be Monday through Friday breakfast. And then I'm going to do a more full-scale brunch on weekends. Atlanta's a big brunch town, and where The Federal's located is densely residential.

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