



Tapas With Brio

A favorite Atlanta eatery serves up top-notch Spanish food and drink, with salsa music on the side.

As a young chef in New York during the 1990s, James Ehrlich saw firsthand how eagerly the city's residents would try—and adopt—new cuisines and styles of cooking. So when the opportunity arose to move to Atlanta in 1997, Ehrlich was curious to see if folks in the South were equally adventurous with food. He and a Spanish-born business partner opened Eclipse di Luna, a tapas-style Spanish restaurant in Atlanta's Buckhead neighborhood. "We saw a market opportunity," he explains. "No one was doing Spanish food like this, and with my partner's background and my own experience as a chef, we thought we could make it work."

Changing demographics have certainly been on their side. Between 1990 and 2007, the state's Hispanic buying power increased a whopping 924%, according to the University of Georgia's Selig Center for Economic Growth. In fact, Georgia's Hispanic market ranked 10th in the U.S. last year, with \$14 billion in purchasing power. Thanks to an influx of Asians and Europeans during the past decade, Ehrlich says, Georgia's capital city has been transformed into "a multicultural and vibrant place to live and work."

Under Ehrlich, who bought out his partner several years ago, Eclipse di Luna has become a lively neighborhood eatery in an artistic warehouse setting. In addition to such authentic Spanish fare as *quesos españoles* (Spanish cheeses) and *ejotes crujientes* (crispy green beans with salt), it offers live Latin music Monday through Saturday and an array of specialty Latin drinks, such as *mojitos*. The restaurant can also accommodate private parties of up to 200 people. "We want it to be a fun place where guests know they are going to have good food and a good time," Ehrlich says.

He depends on AT&T to help Eclipse di Luna remain a hot spot. In the late 1990s, when competition among phone carriers was just heating up, he switched to another carrier but was unhappy with the results. "The service wasn't dependable, which in this business is horrible," he recalls. Furthermore, he found that listing with the AT&T Real Yellow Pages is important to his business. "When people are looking for a restaurant, your name has to be there," he says.

Eclipse di Luna soon switched back to AT&T, a decision Ehrlich has not questioned since. The company now provides the restaurant's business line, its high-speed Internet access and Ehrlich's personal

Eclipse di Luna Facts

- **Industry Focus**
A Spanish restaurant and tapas bar featuring live Latin music and specialty drinks
- **Size**
Two Atlanta restaurants with more than \$4 million in revenues, with plans to open in other southeastern cities
- **Business Needs**
Reliable phone and Internet service for reservations, orders and credit-card transactions
- **Networking Solutions**
AT&T Business DSL Internet Service—a high-speed DSL Internet connection—local and long-distance phone service and wireless service from AT&T



wireless service. "Local businesses are a big part of our clientele, and they tend to make their reservations online," Ehrlich says. "If our phones and Internet are down, they can't do that and they'll go somewhere else, so having a service we can rely on is important. Without AT&T, we wouldn't be in business."

Ehrlich has come to appreciate technology in another way as well. When he started out in the restaurant business, waiters would write each diner's order on a pad, calculate the total, figure the tax and present the bill. These days, Ehrlich explains, his waitstaff uses touch screen computers to enter customer orders and transmit them directly to the kitchen. The computer calculates the tab, adds the tax and even processes the credit or debit card used to pay for the meal. "It takes time to realize how dependent we are on technology," he says. "AT&T is essential to keeping everything up and running. If the phones and computers go down, our waiters can't write orders and business stops."

Love Is Not Enough

Ehrlich opened a second Eclipse di Luna two years ago in a North Atlanta neighborhood. It's taken time for both restaurants to build loyal followings, but now that they have,

each takes in more than \$2 million annually. "Operating a restaurant is more than just a love of food," Ehrlich explains. "There are the labor issues and ordering the right amount of food, as well as keeping the menu fresh and interesting. It's fun, but it's a lot of work."

"AT&T is essential to keeping everything up and running."

—James Ehrlich, Owner, Eclipse di Luna

With the solid performance of his second restaurant, Ehrlich says he's confident that Eclipse di Luna is a portable concept. He'd like to stay in the southeastern U.S., so he is contemplating additional restaurants in such bustling cities as Birmingham; Charlotte, N.C.; and Jacksonville. If he has to wait a bit, that's fine too. The longtime restaurateur acknowledges that the economic climate is a bit challenging right now. "People aren't eating out as much as before," he says. "That's why it's important that when they do eat out, the experience is the best that it can be."

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