

For more information, contact
McCall Mastroianni at
Melissa Libby & Associates,
404-816-3068,
mccall@melissalibbypr.com

FIFTH GROUP RESTAURANTS NAMED RESTAURATEUR OF THE YEAR

*Partners Robby Kukler, Steve Simon and Kris Reinhard Win
Georgia Restaurant Association Crystal of Excellence Award*

ATLANTA (November 12, 2007) – Since 1993, beginning with the creation of South City Kitchen® in Midtown, **Fifth Group Restaurants®** has made its mark on Atlanta as one of the city's foremost restaurant companies. Now, Partners Robby Kukler, Steve Simon and Kris Reinhard are the proud recipients of the Georgia Restaurant Association's Crystal of Excellence Award (GRACE) for Restaurateur of the Year. The Georgia Restaurant Association (GRA), Georgia's voice for the food service industry, presented the trio with this honor at the inaugural awards ceremony held at The Grand Hyatt in Buckhead on November 11, 2007.

"It is a great honor to be recognized as a leader in Georgia's restaurant industry, and to be a finalist among Atlanta's most respectable and outstanding restaurateurs makes this distinction even more special," says Fifth Group Restaurants Partner Robby Kukler.

The GRACE Awards were nominated by the GRA membership and presented to outstanding current members of the Association that show a strong devotion to the industry. Fellow finalists in the Restaurateur of the Year category were Anna and Raymond Hsu, owners of Silk Restaurant, Pacific Rim Bistro and Hsu's Gourmet Chinese Restaurant, and Nancy Oswald, co-owner/franchisee of Ruth's Chris Steak House. These finalists demonstrated consistent standards of excellence and serve as an inspiration to other food professionals; show originality, quality and service to customers; contribute to the advancement and prestige of the foodservice industry; and have actively engaged in Georgia's foodservice industry for a minimum of the past three consecutive years.

Fifth Group in particular has upheld consistent standards of excellence by maintaining a successful balance between corporate operations and chef-driven concepts. Recognized in 2006 as a "Best Place to Work" by the *Atlanta Business Chronicle* and nominated for the 2007 distinction as well, Fifth Group is the first restaurant group to ever win this award.

(more)

GRACE Awards/ add one

Last year, the company continued the proud expansion of Southern cuisine by opening a second location of South City Kitchen in Vinings and also opened Ecco, which was named a “Best New Restaurant in America” by *Esquire* and “Atlanta’s Best New Restaurant” by *Atlanta* magazine. One of Fifth Group’s older concepts, Food Studio, has been a AAA Four-Diamond restaurant for the past six years and is only one of 14 in the state of Georgia with this distinction.

As a consistent leader among Atlanta restaurant groups for *Zagat* service scores and as a company driven by the unique purpose to passionately move people and provide the opportunity to experience joy, Fifth Group shows originality, quality and service to customers. The company’s “Eat Like You Work Here” program, which gives all guests the same 25% discount that employees receive, demonstrates Fifth Group’s creativity and commitment to customers.

A major contributor to the advancement and prestige of the foodservice industry, Fifth Group Restaurants is the first and only restaurant group in Atlanta to commit to serving 100% trans fat-free food. The company also consistently supports up-and-coming foodservice professionals through partnerships with local culinary schools in providing internships and externships. To further advance the prestige of the industry, Fifth Group Restaurants’ partners participate in and/or are on the boards of Midtown Leadership, Midtown Alliance, Atlanta’s Table and the Georgia Restaurant Association, and also commit time to speaking at schools and associations.

John Kessler, feature writer and food columnist for the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, presented Fifth Group with their award, and Ted Turner gave the keynote address during the ceremony. Other awards given throughout the evening included The Industry Partner of the Year Award, The Lifetime Achievement Award, The Innovator Award and The Distinguished Service Award. A portion of the proceeds from the ceremony will be donated to two long-term GRA charity partners: Project Open Hand and Atlanta Community Food Bank.

(more)

GRACE Awards/ add two

A co-founder of Fifth Group Restaurants and a food industry professional for more than 20 years, **Robby Kukler** heads up the marketing and operations divisions of the company, as well as restaurant concept initiatives. **Steve Simon**, also a co-founder, is responsible for all corporate finance, legal and investor relations and human resources, as well as catering sales and operations. **Kris Reinhard** joined the partnership in 1996 after serving as the kitchen manager at South City Kitchen and now heads the company's catering and events division as general manager of Bold American Catering.

Kukler, Simon and Reinhard state watching the employees within their company develop and mature to take on the challenges of growth as one of the most rewarding aspects of their job. The partners and staff of Fifth Group Restaurants focus on the complete dining experience, from location and design to menu creation and staff training. The company has also made a serious commitment to the arts and the Atlanta community, including major sponsorship of such events and organizations as the High Museum Wine Auction, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Taste of the Highlands, Zoo Atlanta's Beastly Feast, Actor's Express and Atlanta's Table.

Fifth Group Restaurants is the privately owned company that operates Atlanta restaurants South City Kitchen[®] *Midtown*, South City Kitchen *Vinings*, Food Studio[®], La Tavola Trattoria and Ecco, as well as Bold American[®] Catering, a catering and events company with onsite services at the Event Gallery at the King Plow Arts Center and offsite at private homes, offices and Atlanta's premier venues. For more information, call 678-302-3251 or visit www.fifthgroup.com.

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