

NW GEORGIA'S PREMIER FEATURE READER NOVEMBER 2010

TURKEY DAY TWIST

Chef **GENA KNOX**
takes time away from her
ascent up the culinary food
chain to put a "simpler"
spin on Thanksgiving

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LEANER. MEANER. GREENER.

*How **THE GREENER
BURGER COMPANY**
turned a former fast-food
staple into a healthy-
minded burger joint for the
new millenium*

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PHOTOS ED WOLKIS



(from left) Greener Burger Company owner Michael Landers looks up from a delicious-looking plate, courtesy of head chef John Beals. Photo by Derek Bell

If things go according to hopes and plans, there might be a business story written someday which notes that The Greener Burger Company restaurant chain began on 315 Broad Street in Rome.

Owner Michael Landers has certainly poured all his efforts into the venture and is looking to one day run 10 or 12 of the restaurants. He already has his eye on Chattanooga, Athens and Smyrna, among others. But, "Rome will always be the

birthplace of Greener Burger," he says. In its first nine weeks, the restaurant served 9,000 people, according to Landers. "For a new business, that's very good, I think. Like any new chain, you have [growing] pains—finding the right mix on the labor, searching

and securing the right purveyors of food so as to keep it the healthiest and freshest possible, detailing the branding."

Landers opened in a spot that once was home to a very popular Krystal restaurant, and it's not hard to find some irony in the fact that both places served hamburgers. But Greener Burger serves fresh, healthier, leaner beef, and a much wider variety on its menu.

Still, Landers kept some aspects of the older restaurant. As he stripped off the flooring that had been put down by subsequent businesses, he discovered the original white-and-black tile familiar

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to Krystal patrons and decided to keep it. The door is the original Krystal door, the counter is original, the stools are modeled on the originals—so that area of the building will look familiar to many.

Sitting adjacent are two more seating areas, one with tables and another with booths. Greener Burger features a large mural that will change with the seasons. The remodeled restaurant will seat approximately 140, Landers says.

"It's a very unique concept. I never ran across one like this," says GB chef, John Beals, who has worked in St. Louis, Atlanta, and as a personal chef for celebs such as Maya Angelou and Sean Combs (the record producer, rapper, fashion designer and actor currently operating under the name "Diddy"). "It's from the farm to the plate. That's very interesting to me; it's what drew me here."

Landers emphasizes that every item is made from scratch, from the ketchup to the mayonnaise. "It's all from scratch. Nothing frozen," he says. "We like to say 'you're feeding your family from scratch.' Everything is homemade. Everything being fresh makes a difference."

He adds that Greener Burger has no fryers, no microwaves, no can openers, nothing made from concentrate, and no sodas. "To not have sodas, that's being



"We want our customers to experience Grandmother's house," Mazur says, "where there was always fabulous food, and you were always welcome."

The Greener Burger Company is open for lunch and dinner from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday, and from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday. They are closed on Monday. The restaurant will add breakfast including eggs, crepes, biscuits, oatmeal, grits, fruit cups, bacon, sausage and bagels beginning Oct. 30.

"Just because you see

white linen napkins doesn't mean you can't be informal," says Landers. "We want to go back to when real service was something to remember."



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welcomed overwhelmingly by parents."

Lorna Mazur, an investor in the concept and assistant to Landers, talks about Greener Burger's efforts to build its reputation as North Georgia's "premier beef emporium." She explains that the restaurant uses Beefmaster products (the first in the area to do so exclusively), which come from a cross breed of Shorthorn, Hereford and Brahman cattle. The cattle are raised with no chemicals, hormones, antibiotics or implants, and all the beef is dry-aged 28 to 30 days.

"It's the only way to eat truly phenomenal beef," Mazur says. "The process has been around for a millennium, but it's very rarely used. Most beef, once it's slaughtered, is wet-aged in a vacuum-sealed bag with a salt solution."

Landers adds, "These animals are harvested lean and clean. This burger is 90

create truly a superb ground-steak burger product. It's not greasy. It's cooked at 160 degrees, which ensures a medium to medium-well burger and safety."

The Greener Burger menu also includes, among other items, Beef Wellington (for which the red wine demi-sauce takes two days to prepare), meat loaf, vegetable plates, soups, salads, a wide array of side dishes, children's choices including peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwiches, special roast coffees, desserts, a wine list and twelve taps of draft beer. Takeout orders are "packaged in an environmentally friendly way."

