

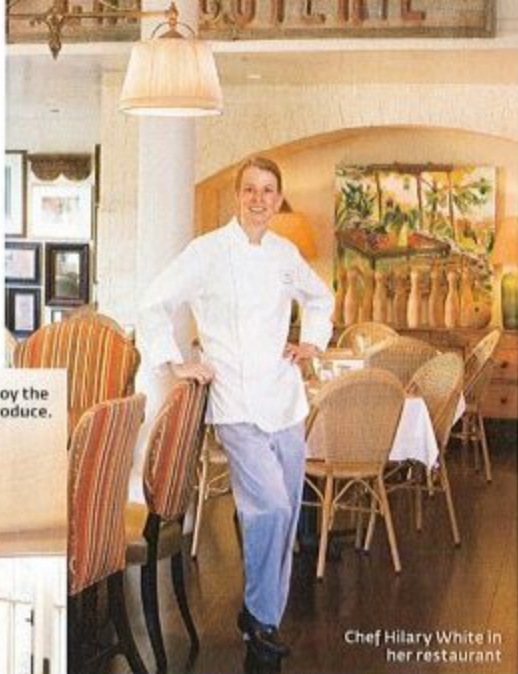
Serenbe's Local Hero

At The Hil, Hilary White serves produce that's picked (and pickled) straight from the garden.

BY CAROLANNE GRIFFITH ROBERTS



Guests enjoy the farm-fresh produce.

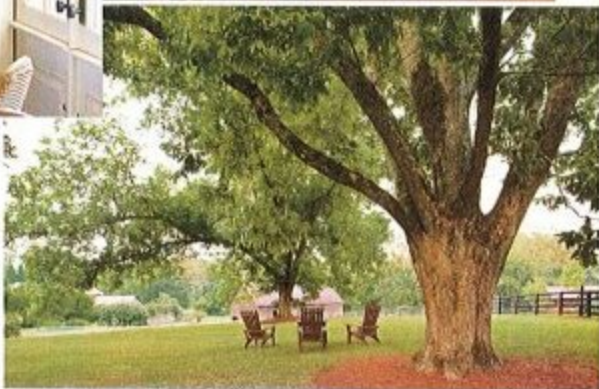


Chef Hilary White in her restaurant

You'll be tempted to stay at Serenbe, the preservation-minded little community in Palmetto, Georgia. It's 30 miles—and a million mind-sets—away from Atlanta.

Based on ecological sustainability principles, Serenbe is dotted with cottages and boutiques over 1,000 acres of land.

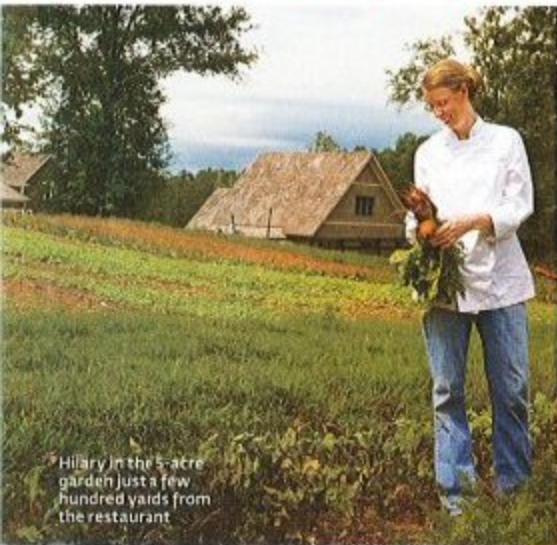
A don't-miss spot here is called The Hil. Named for chef Hilary White, who left the Atlanta restaurant scene (103 West) a little more than two years ago, the restaurant calms you just as the community does. There's none of the frantic, try-too-hard hyper-energy; no urban be-seen scenario going. The scene, instead, is heart-pine floors beneath a pressed tin ceiling salvaged from



The food does everything to keep your peaceful buzz going. Hilary not only draws 95% of her produce from Serenbe's farm (a few hundred yards from the kitchen) during peak growing season, but she also conspires with farmer Paige

Post-meal, try a walk around the grounds.

Because The Hil often serves preserved produce, you never know what season will turn up on your plate.



Hilary in the 5-acre garden just a few hundred yards from the restaurant

from this lush plot of possibilities. The taste of, say, a freshly braised carrot, gently charred cauliflower, or delicate tomato fennel stew slows your conversation.

As most good menus do, this one keeps changing. It's always deceptively simple, and it's always interesting. The South Carolina wreckfish, for instance, is similar to grouper but is found around Charleston, harvested in small numbers. The pot pie, eternally on the menu and emblazoned with a pastry "H" on top, comes filled with whatever's freshest from the farm. Go this month, and you'll probably find butter beans, potatoes, and braising greens.

It's soothing, too, to hear how Hilary preserves what's fresh for future meals. She will not only serve you the sweet potatoes, arugula, eggplant, and squash coming now from the



Hilary pickles and cans produce from the farm. Dilly beans are a specialty.

After the food adventure, with a farewell to the whole family (husband Jim is partner; Hilary's mother, the manager who first greets you), conclude your visit with a stroll. Breathe deep. Pick a road or a path and follow it.

That city up the road can wait. *

★ *Where To Stay*

FOR THE NIGHT

The Inn at Serenbe's choices include the main house (a restored 1905 farmhouse) and four cottages, all reflecting the serene, uncomplicated Serebe feel. Rates begin at \$160 (check for specials). serenbeinn.com or (770) 463-2610

FOREVER

Real estate is still available on the 1,000 acres at Serebe, though planners pledge to keep at least 70% as greenspace and have preserved American Indian archeological sites. Visit serenbe.com and click on "Serebe Community" to take the first steps toward buying or building a

THE HIL: 9110 Selborne Lane, Palmetto, GA 30268; the-hil.com or (770) 463-6040. Make