

OLIVA RESTAURANTS ELEVATES CHEF BRANDON HUGHES TO GROUP EXECUTIVE CHEF*Chef's Innovative Creation Just Announced Eater's Dish of the Year*

ATLANTA: Oliva Restaurants has had a whirlwind year, from the opening of modern Israeli restaurant **Aziza** and accompanying falafel stand **Falafel Nation** to preparations for their upcoming Israeli diner **Rina** along the Eastside BeltLine trail. The exciting additions have not stopped there as the restaurant group has tapped Executive Chef Brandon Hughes to take the lead of all culinary operations of Bellina Alimentari, Aziza, Falafel Nation, and Rina which is opening in January.

Originally from Macon, Georgia, Hughes moved to the city in 2006 to attend the Art Institute of Atlanta for an associate degree in culinary arts. After graduation, he landed his first job alongside famed chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten at Spice Market before working at acclaimed restaurants Aria and Bacchanalia.

In 2015, he teamed up with Tal Baum on the first of her now four concepts, award-winning Italian market and restaurant **Bellina Alimentari** in Ponce City Market. With a focus on traditional Italian cooking where everything is made from local, seasonal ingredients, Hughes has embodied Bellina's motto – La Vita è Bontà or "food as a way of life." As he has stepped into this new role, Hughes has continued to grow Bellina's motto as a philosophy for the group's latest restaurants.

"I am so proud to work alongside Chef Brandon. In the last four years, he has been instrumental to our success with his incredible sensibility of the final product, making sure each dish is delicious and exciting," says Baum, owner of Oliva Restaurants. "With each new concept, he takes the time to study the culture and fully capture the subtleties of each cuisine. He has taken the reigns for everything we work on and I couldn't be more thrilled to continue to expand our culinary offerings under his expertise and guidance."

Prior to the opening of Aziza and Falafel Nation, Hughes and Baum traveled to Israel to experience the dishes and learn first-hand from Israeli chef Erez Komarovsky. Hughes soaked up everything he learned and returned to Atlanta to craft a menu of elevated Israeli dishes set to exhilarate palates using local, farm-fresh ingredients. Since its summer opening, the restaurant has received rave reviews for its delightfully comforting dishes and perfect blend of Middle Eastern cuisine with his Southern influences. His Akko Prawns dish, made with jumbo shrimp atop thick falafel toast, just announced as *Eater's* Dish of the Year in 2019. Now, Hughes is working to develop the menu for Rina, Oliva Restaurant's newest concept. The diner-inspired restaurant is set to open in mid-January at the Ford Factory Lofts and will serve traditional Israeli street food bites.

"Since day one of being in a kitchen, I've always believed that the importance for a chef is to cultivate strong relationships with local farmers and to be selective in the ingredients I choose," said Hughes. "Being a major part of this restaurant group, I am able to establish these relationships and continue the culture we set at Bellina. We really value giving back to the community that gives back to us and this includes locally sourcing our ingredients which has a direct impact on our area and the environment. I am so proud to be a part of the Oliva Restaurant concepts as these values truly set us apart as a group."

If interested in speaking with Chef Brandon Hughes, please email Brittany Westveer at brittany@360media.net or call 404-577-8686. For more information on Oliva Restaurants, visit the group's [website](http://www.olivarestaurants.com).

About Oliva Restaurants: Oliva Restaurants is a collection of restaurants in Atlanta, Georgia owned by restaurateur Tal Postelnik Baum. While each restaurant concept differs from the other, each Oliva restaurant is inspired by Baum's own story. Born and raised in Israel with many years spent in Italy, she found the inspiration for her first Atlanta restaurant, Bellina Alimentari, an award-winning Italian market and wine bar located in Ponce City Market. The 2018 Restaurateur of the Year Award nominee has three more concepts that nod to her Israeli roots – Aziza serves modern Israeli cuisine in a lively and energetic setting at Westside Provisions District, Falafel Nation is a quick bite of middle Eastern street foods and Rina (opening January 2020) will serve casual, fresh and bright plates at the Ford Factory Lofts. Executive Chef Brandon Hughes brings his culinary acumen and oversees all four concepts. Follow along with the restaurant group at www.olivarestaurants.com.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Brittany Westveer + Katie Cline | 360 Media, Inc. – 404-577-8686 or brittany@360media.net



Executive Chef Brandon Hughes. Photo by Angie Webb.