

# THE ATLANTAN

Bluegrass, Bourbon and Burgers at the St. Regis.



## Derby Smashed!

Bespoke Bourbon Comes to the St. Regis Atlanta

In my family it was considered bad form to drink before 5PM. But it's before noon on a gorgeous spring day in Versailles, Kentucky. And when Woodford Reserve master distiller Chris Morris—who is such whisky-royalty he has a Billy Reid suit named after him and is to bourbon-hounds what Justin Bieber is to teenage girls—asks you to “drink,” it seems like bad form not to. The official nectar of the annual Kentucky Derby, Woodford has also crafted the distillery's first couture bourbon in Georgia for the

St. Regis Atlanta, an “expressive and dessert-like” blend, says St. Regis's food and beverage director Megan Gray, “slightly sweeter, with caramel and butterscotch notes.” Just in time for the hotel's first anniversary, 180 bottles of the St. Regis custom bourbon arrived in Atlanta in April and debuted at a spirited Bluegrass, Bourbon and Burgers event that will recur every Wednesday night this summer on the terrace. The St. Regis bespoke bourbon is also available in tempting cocktails, including a gold-flecked Astor Manhattan (and in the Paces 88 kitchen, where chef Mark Alba coaxes the custom hooch into a variety of dishes, such as bourbon-marinated barbecue ribs and a warm upside-down peach grits cake with caramel sauce and bourbon chantilly). Back in Kentucky, St. Regis GM Simon Rusconi passes that barrel-fresh brown nectar like communion wine from Morris's hands to mine. I hesitate, then decide mother doesn't *always* know best. —F.F. **A**