

# Savoy Grill is a Place to KICK BACK AND HAVE FUN

BY SAMELIA BANKOLE

The Savoy Grill just opened in October 2015. Owner Derrick Harris says it has been a dream for years to open a restaurant and co-owner Elijah Williams says it was a perfect fit for him as well.

“The idea for opening this kind of business has been in my mind for years and began to take shape back in April of 2015 when my partner Elijah and I first began to seriously consider opening the business when the property became available,” says Derrick Harris.

“I come from a long line of entrepreneurs in the hospitality industry so it was a natural progression to start Savoy,” says Elijah Williams.

Originally from Washington DC, Harris attended Columbia University at the same time as a particular famous person. “My only claim to fame is that I attended the same college at the same time as President Barack Obama. Unfortunately, we never became friends,” Harris jokes.

Later, he moved to Georgia in 1990 to attend school for his MBA at Emory. Afterwards, he became an HR professional, which spanned over 25 years as a career for him. Derrick Harris has worked with such companies as Coca-Cola and JP Morgan.

Co-owner Elijah Williams also has experience in the business world. Originally from East Palo Alto, CA, Elijah moved to Atlanta in the 80's. He attended Clayton State University and was a staffing consultant by

trade for over 15 years afterwards, working for well-established corporations like Sprint and Covad.

In addition to now owning Savoy Grill with co-owner, Elijah Williams, he is also the owner of a staffing and consulting firm, Stand by Talent. The firm has been in business for 11 years. “I decided I wanted to try a business working directly with the public instead of just corporations to see if I would enjoy the direct feedback you get when serving the public. So far, I love it,” says Derrick Harris.

Opening the Savoy Grill has taken a lot of hard work and dedication for Harris and Williams.

“I personally lost over 10 pounds over the last few months working to make Savoy a reality and I just enjoy seeing our hard work come to fruition,” says Harris.

As a business owner, Derrick Harris sees the importance of humor in his everyday life.

“When things don't go as expected, sometimes I just laugh it off because I know how hard it was getting here. I've grown a lot stronger and now things that would have really bothered me six months ago I can just laugh at and overcome it with a smile on my face.” For Elijah Williams, it's living in the moment.

“Never get so caught up in the moment that you allow this minute to make this very moment seem to be eternal,” says Elijah.

On the menu of Savoy is classic comfort food like grilled shrimp and burgers. There is also music and good entertainment to enjoy. “We strive to bring the best quality experience, food, music and general entertainment to the Stockbridge and Henry County as can be found farther away in downtown Atlanta. We saw no reason why people in this community would have to drive so far away to have a good time without sacrificing quality and service,” says Derrick Harris.

What inspires Harris every day is the satisfaction he feels when customers have a wonderful experience. “If we can make our customers feel better when they leave us than when they came in the door, I think we have done our job and that is what drives me in this business,” says Derrick Harris.

When he was in HR, Harris wanted to help ordinary people grow professionally. “I enjoy making a positive impact on people one person at a time. This is why I got into HR in the first place. I wanted to help make the working lives of people more satisfying.”

Derrick Harris is married to Debra, a 4th grade teacher and current teacher of the year. The couple has one daughter, Chloe, a high school student and the family lives in DeKalb County. Elijah Williams is married to Dr. Kelly Williams and has two sons, Austin, 20 and Justin, 15. Austin is in California attending Foothill College and Justin attends Dutchtown High School.

Harris hopes that their business will become a staple in the Stockbridge community and welcomes residents to come in. “We want to become an integral part of this community.

In fact, we feel that Savoy belongs to this community and we are just here to make it the kind of place where everyone is welcomed, enjoys visiting and feels comfortable.”




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