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A Perfect Pairing

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It's only been a couple of years, but already husband-and-wife team King Braswell and Stacy Brown have established their business, called simply Botanic, as the go-to destination for locals in Opelika, Alabama.

Clockwise from top left: Botanic in Opelika, Alabama, was officially opened in 2022 by King Braswell and Stacy Brown. • The façade of The Garden restaurant and conservatory was reconstructed with reclaimed building materials. • The "bones" (posts and trusses) of The Garden conservatory is really a Cravo greenhouse that are hidden by brick columns. • Outside of the garden center are the perennials, annuals and shrubs. Inside are houseplants, tropicals, succulents and other foliage.

King is a horticulture veteran, graduating from Auburn University with a degree in Horticulture and working at operations like Young's Plant Farm. Stacy is the founder of Chicken Salad Chick, the popular sandwich restaurant chain with operations around the country. Together, they wanted to blend both of their passions and strengths into one place where people can buy plants, dine, shop, celebrate events, imbibe on spirits, sip beer, taste wine and just hang out.

Green Profit reported the news of Botanic's grand opening in the fall of 2022, and when I was in the area for the Southern Plant Tour this past June, Jen Polanz said, "You should stop by Botanic!"

And I'm glad I did. King and his Director of Marketing Grace Mitchell gave me a tour of Botanic, which still had a lot of plans in development. Botanic was originally an old catfish restaurant that King and Stacy have been slowly building around. In the front is a conservatory called The Garden, which has a completely new façade using reclaimed building materials.

“There are only 160,000 people in Auburn and Opelika—there are not a lot of people,” explained King. “But we wanted to try and create a destination for them. Our goal is to mix aesthetics with food production.”



Counter clockwise from top left: King said they use display gardens around the property to show people about garden design. • The Garden’s water feature provides a calming background ambiance and a change of scenery for the ducks and geese who waddle their way inside from the pond.

Inside The Garden will be a new restaurant set to open at the end of the year that will serve breakfast and lunch to the public, and be available for private events at night. It includes an old grain silo that’s been completely transformed into a unique private dining area and a lovely water feature to add some calming background noise. Downstairs is a wine cellar where they’ll hold wine tastings and upstairs will be a martini bar.

Attached to The Garden is The Grille restaurant, which is already open for business and was serving customers when I was there, and The Market, a coffee and pastry shop where customers can also buy everything from homemade jams and jellies to pasta and spices.

Just through The Market is a patio bar with a stage for live music and small concerts. And The Garden Shoppe is a small but quaint out-building where you can buy home accessories and garden décor. Greenhouses that will eventually grow hydroponic greens for the restaurants were recently finished, but were not up-and-running yet when I was there.

“We’re by no means where we want to be,” said King. “We want to be as vertically integrated with our production as we can.”

Notice how I haven’t even mentioned plants yet? But they’re also a part of what makes Botanic a must-visit for the locals.



Pictured: An old grain silo has been completely transformed into a very unique private dining area. Wood paneling and a drape hanging from the ceiling cuts down on the echoing.

The garden center has an outdoor area for annuals, perennials, shrubs and hanging baskets, where inside is a wide selection of houseplants, tropicals, succulents and other foliage. At the time, King said they were traveling to Florida (which is where they source all of their indoor plants and tropicals) every two weeks—that's how fast the inventory was turning.

He said that the garden center is still in the construction phase and they're still in the beginning stages of seeing what their local market likes and what they'll buy. Being a veteran of this industry, King knows how the peaks and valleys of the garden retail biz go, but he and Stacy are going to work their hardest to make those dips more shallow.

"Hopefully, we can be agile enough to stay in front of new trends and put our own spin on it," said King. "We have to constantly stay ahead and be great at it." **GP**

Counter clockwies from top left: The Market, a coffee and pastry shop, also offers homemade jams, jellies, pasta and spices. • The Grille restaurant has a living green wall inside. • The patio bar and beer garden features a stage for live music and is surrounded by plants. • Duke's Pond was emptied, cleaned up and refilled when King and Stacy bought the property. Now, it's home to many ducks and geese. On the far side of the pond, the plan is to build 13 cottages that will be available to rent out as an amenity for people who come to attend Auburn University football games.






The Garden Shop

