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Charleston Chew: Where to Eat and Drink in Charleston, South Carolina

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The dining scene in this southern charmer has reinvented itself with a slew of new options for cocktail hour and beyond. Here, 14 places to eat and drink in Charleston.

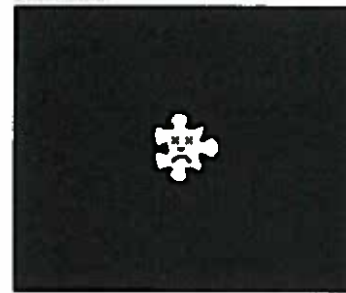
During my grandmother's heyday, you wouldn't wear jeans on King Street or dine out on weeknights. Charleston has since relaxed its starchy code of etiquette to the point where tattooed millennials in "Chucktown" T-shirts skateboard through Marion Square. Thankfully, the upside of this new informality is an inviting reinvention of Southern hospitality as it applies to the cocktail hour and beyond. Yes, you can still dress up for dinner at McCrady's (2 *Unity Alley*; 843-577-0025, [mccradysrestaurant.com](#)) or F.I.G. (232 *Meeting St.*; 843-805-5900; [eatatfig.com](#)) but the latest wave of eateries and lounges inspire small plate snacking rather than a multicourse sit-down. And while I still feel slightly guilty dashing around the Holy City in vintage Alabama Charin denim, no one harangues me anymore for being unladylike when ordering a Bush Hog (Averall Plantation

rum, lemon, Angostura bitters) and pickled shrimp at the Gin Joint (182 *East Bay St.*; 843-577-6111; [theginjoint.com](#)).



COCKTAIL HOUR

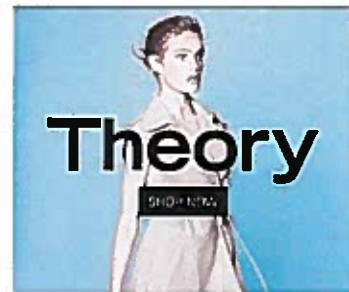
In a converted brick townhouse next to Sean Brock's Husk (76 *Queen St.*; 843-577-2500; [huskrestaurant.com](#)) the Bar at Husk stocks an encyclopedic collection of small-batch bourbons. Try "JoJo's Second Home" with Elijah Craig 12-year, Nonino Amaro, Cognac, agave, and pecan shell brandy. Mixologist Craig Nelson presides at Proof (437 *King St.*; 843-793-1422; [charlestonproof.com](#))



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where he updates classic libations with spirits from local micro-distillers. (He makes the house ginger beer as well.) His "Knuckleball" contains Old Grand-Dad 114, Mexican Coca-Cola reduction, orange bitters, and pickled boiled peanuts. Edmund's Oast (1081 Marion Dr.; 843-727-1145; edmundsoast.com) is a brew pub with its own beers on tap but the cocktail list is wildly inventive; my favorite refresher on a humid summer evening is "Jack & the Bean Stalk" with gin, Aperol, grapefruit, Amaro, and locally produced Jack Rudy tonic. Upstairs from the Mackintosh, The Cocktail Club (479 King St.; 843-724-9411; thecocktailclubcharleston.com) is a modern speakeasy that specializes in farm-to-shaker beverages. (The farmer's market is held in nearby Marion Square on Saturdays.) I usually linger on the rooftop terrace with a "Grass & Seed" of barrel-aged Aquavit, cilantro, dill, cucumber juice, tomato water, ginger, and Hellfire Shrub. Beets eating your vegetables.

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SUPPERTIME

While shrimp-and-grits is the default dish that appears in various guises on Lowcountry menus all over town, what I really crave are the fried oysters Rockefeller at Leon's Oyster Shop (698 King St.; 843-531-8500; leonsaysfishshop.com) along with tart watermelon pickle and hush puppies dunked in honey butter. If regional ACE Blades are in season, I get a dozen raw with port mignonette at Brasserie Gigi (102 N. Market St.; 843-722-6393; brasseriegigi.com). Chef Sean Rieflin's tempura Combahee soft-shell crab sandwich is worth the wait in line for a stool at 167 Raw (269 E. Bay St.; 843-579-4997; 167raw.com). Stop in Artisan Meat Share (33 Spring St.; 843-641-7299; artisanmeatsharecharleston.com) to order Craig Diehl's house-made charcuterie and cured meats. Pair a plate of lardo, braunschweiger, and fennel salami with smoked bacon jam and pepper jelly. Two Boroughs Larder (186 Coming St.; 843-637-3722; twoboroughslarder.com) has regular Meat + Eat dinner popups with the Gin Joint, but I like to pop in this grocery store/restaurant for beef tartare with a wild onion pancake and snapper crudo. Xiao Bao Biscuit's (224 Rutledge Ave.; xiaobobiscuit.com) Asian soul food is ideal for a crowd. The Izakaya-style whole pan-seared fish of the day, Taiwanese niu rou mian noodles, and Sichuan mapo tofu are welcome additions to the neo-South pantry.



LATE NIGHT EATS

This isn't New Orleans. Charleston turns out the light early. Callie's Hot Little Biscuit (478 1/2 King St.; 843-737-5159; calliesbiscuits.com) is one my favorite last-call stops to counter the effects of a cocktail-intensive evening; this tiny new shop on Upper King Street sells floury delights stuffed with country ham or black pepper bacon until 2 A.M. on weekends. The Butcher & Bee (654 King St.; 843-619-0202; butcherandbee.com) has a regular Friday late night taco menu; when it's on the chalkboard, don't miss the pork belly banh mi with miso mayonnaise. Mercy me.

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