

Charleston's Best Jazz Bars

by [Katie McElveen](#) January - last edited January

Jazz may not have been born in Charleston, but there's no denying the lowcountry's impact on the genre. Today, jazz is celebrated throughout Charleston. We've selected a few of Charleston's best jazz bars to give you a flavour of this city's infectious music scene.

According to jazz musician and historian Quentin Baxter, not only do driving Gullah rhythms add soulful inflection to Charleston-style jazz, but they also helped shape the sound of jazz as the city's early jazz artists had to go elsewhere to find success. "Duke Ellington, Count Basie and so many other bands were filled with talented musicians from Charleston," he explains. "They got those bands to swing the way they did!"



Shows begin at 8pm each night at the Mezz © Reese Moore Photography

Quentin Baxter designed the sound system at [The Mezz](#) from the ground up and created a wonderful listening space for live music in the process. It works as a dining room, too, thanks to large tables and access to the kitchen at [Sermet's](#) restaurant downstairs – try the signature lavender-scented duck breast or calamari with orange zest. Accompanied by a rotating roster of artists, Baxter, a percussionist, plays most nights.



There's jazz every night at 6pm at High Cotton © [High Cotton](#)

Pop into [High Cotton](#) for happy hour and you'll want to stay for dinner—specialties like smoked sweet corn bisque and buttermilk fried oysters are served up alongside live jazz every night from 6pm. The cosy room, with its heart-pine floors and plantation shutters, resembles a lowcountry manse.

[Halls Chophouse](#) may be famous for their Gospel Sunday Brunch, but every night at 7pm, the jazz flows, and doesn't stop



until well into the evening. Upper King Street, with its lively bars and late-night scene, can be found just outside the door.

Yep, it's a tiki bar, complete with kitschy drinks, but [Voodoo Lounge](#) also serves up tasty food (try the confit-laced duck tacos) and, twice a week, jazz. Stop by on Tuesdays for an ever-changing mix of musicians, or swing by on Sundays for Cuban jazz and salsa dancing.



Enjoy jazz seven night a week at Charleston Grill © Orient-Express Hotels

Can't find Quentin Baxter at The Mezz? Then you'll probably find him at [Charleston Place Hotel](#), performing at [Charleston Grill](#). Charleston Grill was one of the first restaurants in the city to support local artists by offering nightly jazz, and the music continues seven nights a week. Enjoy it in the dining room or grab a front-row seat in the bar, where the full dinner menu is served.



The Charleston Jazz Orchestra plays a variety of jazz © Alice Keeney/Jazz Artists of Charleston

If you're staying on the north end of King Street, you can take in live piano jazz on weekends at [Swamp Fox Restaurant and Bar](#) at the Francis Marion Hotel. Twenty members strong, the Charleston Jazz Orchestra is the city's largest group of jazz performers. During the winter months, the orchestra performs at the [Charleston Music Hall](#), which was built in 1850 as a train depot and transformed into a performance space in 1995.



A talented soloist of the Jazz Orchestra © Alice Keeney/Jazz Artists of Charleston

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Have you visited any of these Charleston Jazz bars? Which is your favourite? Let us know in the comments below.

Written by [Katie McElveen](#)