The Elysian Bar at Hotel Peter & Paul is warm, intimate, and classic. Those adjectives could also describe the dishes, at once inventive and familiar.

The three pillars of big-city culture are food, music, and architecture. The old Feelings Cafe in the Marigny was always more praised for the atmosphere of the space than for the quality of its meals. Ora, the building’s new resident, keeps that vibe. The menu, while a conservative mix of steak and seafood marks an improvement on the food. (Braa and I both liked the real chop best, but Ninko thought it was outshone by the french fries, which arrived first per his request.)

Hotel Peter & Paul, a beautiful renovation of an old Catholic church, houses The Elysian Bar, which is warm, intimate, and classic. Those adjectives could also describe the dishes, like the duck egg omelet and the Baked Sourdough Custard, which are at once inventive and familiar.

I get so many requests for New Orleans restaurant suggestions that I used to just recycle an old email I’d sent out time and time again. That no longer works. There are far too many new places to try and too many old spots deserving of return visits. Moreover, for the first time, I can now offer reviews for those who have pint-size diners in their parties.

The restaurant scene is evolving and improving in cities all over the South, but none of those places has offerings that are more dynamic and exciting than New Orleans.

Lois Erle Ellis is a native New Orleanian and author of Treme: Stories and Recipes from the Heart of New Orleans.
The Genius of The Grey
Mashama Bailey returns home and proves food can bring people together

BY JESSICA B. HARRIS

The story of Mashama Bailey's rise to the culinary stratosphere is the stuff of a legend in the making. A career changer, she studied at the Institute of Culinary Education in New York City and at the famed La Varenne cooking school with gastronomic icon Anne Willan, who became a mentor for her. She worked in multiple New York City kitchens and ended at Prune, where she rose to the rank of sous chef under the equally iconic Gabrielle Hamilton (another mentor!).

Bailey's next career choice came as a surprise to many. She accepted an offer to partner with entrepreneur and venture capitalist John O. Morris in a new food opportunity—opening The Grey restaurant in Savannah. In 2015, it was named a semifinalist for the James Beard Award for Best New Restaurant. Then, in 2018 came Bailey's earning of the coveted James Beard Award for Best Chef: Southeast. This was an amazing and seemingly rapid ascension; but the story is much deeper, more complex, and more interesting.

As Bailey tells it, "I was born in The Bronx, and between the ages of zero and five we went back and forth from New York to Georgia because my mom's mom was there." Eventually, the family stayed in Georgia until her 13th birthday, when they moved back up to New York City. Visiting grandparents in the South as an affordable summer childcare option is a common African American pattern, but for Bailey, each return to Savannah was a jubilant homecoming.

Her culinary journey with and eating in that space. It feels very comfortable." She continues, "That's what clinched the deal for me. If I had come here and it hadn't been so warm and inviting and ready for me to take the helm, then I wouldn't be doing this in Savannah. It makes me proud that a place that was intended to separate people is now bringing together those of all nationalities, ethnicities, and races."

And Bailey's passion for change and commitment to her craft extends beyond the doors of The Grey. As chairwoman of the Edna Lewis Foundation, which was founded in 2012, she is carrying out the mission "to revolve, preserve, and celebrate the rich history of African-American cookery by cultivating a deeper understanding of Southern Food and culture in America." Bailey says, "It's about pooling our resources and helping each other up."

As for The Grey she and partner Morris continue to serve incredible dishes like their signature lamb that artfully combines the flavors of Greece, Ethiopia, Trinidad, and the American South. They call it "Port City Cooking," a name that speaks to the history of the place in which they operate in a space that they have truly claimed and made their own, a spot to bring the whole world together around- and on-the-table.

Jessica B. Harris is the author, editor, or translator of 16 books, including 12 cookbooks documenting the foods and foodways of the African diaspora.

HER COOKING INSPIRATION

- Jt: Who taught you to cook? 
  MB: I learned so much from my paternal grandmother. She loved throwing parties and hosting Sunday dinners and Easter. Whatever the occasion, she wanted everyone to be at her house.
- Jt: Do you remember the first dish you prepared with her? 
  MB: I think it was a seafood salad. She directed, and did all of the chopping, cutting, and mixing. The most delicious thing we ever made together was calliflower casserole.

THE TOP 10

1. The Grey (Charleston, SC)
2. The Grocery (Charleston, SC)
3. Carolee (Charleston, SC)
4. Mama J's (Richmond, VA)
5. Hog & Hominy (Memphis, TN)
6. The Library (St. Petersburg, FL)
7. Johnny's Restaurant (Birmingham, AL)
8. Saltbox Seafood Joint (Durham, NC)
9. Coquette (New Orleans, LA)
10. Saint Leo (Oxford, MS)
"Remember, tonight is a marathon, not a sprint."

Tucked in the corner of the kitchen, set with the restaurant's trademark blue ribbon. The table seats four to more, no less—and is one of the most sought after spots in the Big Easy. (Yes, anyone can reserve it, but we do suggest booking way in advance.)

Commander's Palace has been a New Orleans landmark since 1893. For over 20 years, cousins and co-proprietors Ti, Adelaide Martin and Lally Brennan have worked tirelessly to maintain the restaurant's high level of excellence from hospitality to the ever-changing "haute Creole" menu. Yet as famous as the restaurant is, many guests have not experienced it from inside the kitchen. Those who have will come back again and again, year after year, making their reservations months ahead of time.

Unlike the restaurant's kitchen, which depicts the mood of the dining room of Commander's Palace, which is dotted with ornate hand-painted wall murals and crystal chandeliers. I was left to the banquettes.
Gullah Magic in Charleston
A culinary tour of the city's African American legends

BY ROSALIND BENTLEY

For about 20 years, my mother-in-law, Linda, lived in Charleston, South Carolina, on Queen Street just a couple of blocks from Colonial Lake. We walked everywhere when we visited. Oleander and palm trees shaded us on the brick path through the Unitarian Church cemetery, part of a shortcut we took to the shops along King Street. At the Marion Square farmers' market, we bought shrimp from men and women who'd netted them that morning. From there, we scurried to the corner of Broad and Meeting Streets, where I'd buy a seaweed basket from one of the ladies on the sidewalk outside St. Michael's Church. Sometimes I'd linger and watch their nimble brown fingers weave the blades into what would become magnificent vessels.

Then about eight years ago, Linda, a Northerner who was tired of being told she was "from off" (what native Charlestonians call non-natives), packed up, sold her hatter yellow town house and moved to Maine.

I still haven't forgiven her.

Atlanta has been my home for 16 years, a symbol of African American progress and achievement. But when I walked the streets of the Holy City, past its historic single houses with skinny blue piazzas, past black wrought iron gates and curly shutter dogs, I felt the essence of those thousands of enslaved people and African culture because for years they made up the majority of the city's population," professor Bernard Powers told me recently. He is a scholar on the history of slavery at the College of Charleston and also the interim president and CEO of the International African American Museum (IAAM), slated to open in late 2022. "The African signature is endemic in this place."

Charleston is one of the nation's top tourist destinations. This is the fourth consecutive year that Southern Living readers have voted it South's Best City. Visitors wander along Tradd Street or Rainbow Row and for a moment imagine they are in some quaint English town. But I can't make the trip without thinking of what life was like for the...
Africans who lived in and around this city from its founding in 1670 until the Civil War’s end. Most of them were not free. They created a unique culture, language, and cuisine that thrives to this day, yet many aren’t aware of their contributions. But corner to corner, alley to alley, here are the testaments.

On a recent visit, I opened my eyes to their legacy—an American legacy—in ways I hadn’t before.

I arrive late Friday morning, and I am getting hungry. Hillary Douglas, a native of the Charleston area and a chef who at 79 years old doesn’t know how to retire, takes me to Bertha’s Kitchen. It’s a James Beard Award winner, an institution started nearly 40 years ago by Albertina Grant and now run by her daughters in the working-class neighborhood of Union Heights.

I feel right at home sipping the fragrant of tender meat from stewed chicken necks swimming in a thick gravy. Gizzards bob beside them. The only green on my plate is pale and sautéed until tender sweet cabbage. I spoon the gravy over my peas and rice. Douglas tells me that in the years after the Civil War, one of the jobs that was open to black men was working in phosphate mines nearby. Bertha’s isn’t far from Ashley Phosphate Road, a reference to that industry.

The restaurant, with its radiant aqua exterior and welcoming interior, serves a few tourists. But working people know it’s a place where the calories consumed at lunch might be burned by day’s end through hard physical labor. Men in paint-splattered coveralls eat plates of lima beans and ham hocks, fried and baked chicken, and greens. A lady in a silk sleep bonnet orders pork chops.

“They serve good food, and they serve enough,” Douglas says as she wraps my leftover piece of cornbread that I’m too full to eat in a napkin to save for a snack (for himself).

I’m still stuffed two hours later when I meet Paul Garbarini of Uniquely Charleston Tours for a walk through the city. I’m grateful for the exercise—more grateful for what I learn.

On my tour, Garbarini focuses on the foundation of the city: its bricks. Brick plantations lined the banks of the Cooper River before the Civil War. Enslaved Africans made them, including the ones used to construct Fort Sumter. As we move around the walls of the Old City Jail, Garbarini points to Indentations in some of the oldest bricks, thick and rounded along the corners. “Those are the fingerprints of enslaved people,” Garbarini tells me. Sometimes they’re really small, so that was probably a child because we know they also worked in the brickyards.

We find our way to the Unitarian Church and cemetery. Outside the historic sanctuary to the right of the front steps is a rectangular memorial of brick topped with shells. Attached to it is the silhouette of a Sankofa bird, a West African symbol, rendered in iron. Etched on a granite slab beneath it are the words: ‘In Memory of Those Enslaved Workers Who Made These Bricks and Helped Build Our Church C. 1774-1877.”
During a renovation project about 10 years ago, the colonial-era bricks were uncovered, and some were saved. The church used them to build the memorial and dedicated it in 2013. The Sankofa symbol means, loosely, to learn from the past yet move forward.

ALTHOUGH I'D RATHER go back to my hotel room and sit with what I've learned, I still meet Douglas for dinner at Nigel's Good Food, located in North Charleston. We start out with Gueechie Wings, chicken wings tossed in a sauce of honey and vinegar with mild heat from peppers. Douglas orders a plate of pork; its slices of okra wrinkling sous to plump shrimp. I have a Charleston staple: lima beans stud with nuggets of ham hock.

The name Gueechie Wings is a nod to the Sea Island culture that stretches from North Carolina to North Florida. In Florida, where I'm originally from, it's known as Gueechie or Gueechie. Here it's called Gullah. They are distinct cultures, created by enslaved Africans from different countries who were put together indiscriminately on plantations on the barrier islands and coasts. They created a Creole language by melding their native words and phrases with snippets of English. A spirit of independence and resistance nurtured by distance from the heart of the mainland developed and thrived. It lives on today, expressed by new generations who are bent on preserving it through music, photography, and scholarship.

But Gullah and Gueechie are also foodways. Each neighborhood institution in Charleston Seafood, My Three Sons of Charleston, and Martha Lou's Kitchen keep it alive. I have broadcast at Harriett's Kitchen on Saturday. The place is plain and rough around the edges. It feels familiar. A quartet of older black men sit at a table rehearsing the week. They are clearly
regularly. I’m served sauteed shrimp and crab over grits I slather grape jelly on my white bread toast. This is joy.

Charlotte Jenkins, who is considered by many to be a matriarch of traditional Gullah cuisine, later told me my breakfast, minus the jelly, was a typical Gullah meal. The overall diet was seafood rich. "When I was growing up, the fishermen would get their catch and go to their customers’ houses to sell it," explains Jenkins, author of Gullah Cuisine. "By Land and By Sea. You didn’t need a license to go out and catch. Black folks made a living off the river."

After breakfast, I join Alphonso Brown for a two-hour Gullah tour. He is Gullah, a "bees-yah" (Charleston native), and speaks the language. One stop is the backyard shop of the late Philip Simmons, the legendary blacksmith who, through his seven-decade career, made some of the city’s most intricate and revered wrought iron gates. He died in 2009, at 97 years old. His works stands in the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture. He always paid homage to Peter Simmons (no relation), the formerly enslaved man who taught him to render iron as though it were a lyric.

Before the sea sea, I dash through Hampton Park to see the monument to Denmark Vesey, the carpenter who in 1822 led an ill-fated and ultimately thwarted rebellion of enslaved people in Charleston. The bronze statue wasn’t there last time I visited. Vesey was a founder of what is now Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, or "Mother Emanuel," where nine souls were murdered in 2015 during a Bible study.

For old time’s sake, I stop outside St. Michael’s Church and buy myself a sweetgrass basket, made with a weaving tradition still alive in Sierra Leone and other West African nations. Dinner is from Dave’s Carry-Out, a couple of blocks off King Street: shrimp lightly battered with an egg wash and flour and then flash fried, red rice and a salad. A few days later, BI Dennis (chef and national face of what he likes to call a "Gullah renaissance") says I cause me some well. However, he assures the fact I missed out on "soup bunch" at Dave’s, explaining the term.

"When farmers came in from James Island, whatever they had left—a collard, collards, a potato, a hot pepper, a rutabaga, maybe a little stewed meat, maybe not—they cooked it all down to where it was like a stew," Dennis says. "That’s an African as you can get."

That Saturday night, I curl up on the hotel bed and devour the shrimp, rice, and salad. I am leaving the next day. I’ll have to return for soup bunch, and another sweetgrass basket, and a walk along Waterfront Wharf, especially after the IAM opens. Odds are—any of the ancestors who began the initial leg of my family’s journey in America took this or her first uncertain steps onto that wharf along the Cooper River.

Yes, Charleston is the Holy City. But it is also a sacred one.

Ronald Bentley is a reporter at the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. She is a Pulitzer Prize finalist and received her MFA from the University of Georgia.
Clockwise from far left: Fishers of Orange Beach Marina the Original Oyster House: The Gulf, brushes at the Original Oyster House.

BEST BEACH TOWN

Gulf View

With its white sand, decadent seafood, and pristine wildlife sanctuaries, the Alabama coast was once the South’s best kept secret. Just Ask The Gulf Shores/Orange Beach crowd what they like best about this 52-mile stretch of sugary sand, and they’ll immediately start naming restaurants. That’s because they consider the sand and surf a given. Outdoor riches here are remarkable. Gulf shoreline, bayous, rivers, and lakes.

not to mention the Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge. The new Coastal Alabama Back Bay Bluesway offers four different trails for paddling.

Within Gulf State Park, are 28 miles of paved trails to explore. A new 25-acre Alabama Gulf Cost Zoo, significantly larger than the old site, will create better space for the animals while providing more educational opportunities for visitors.

It’s hard to imagine now, but back in its bell bottom days, Alabama’s Gulf Coast offered little beyond campgrounds and the occasional mom-and-pop motel. The dining scene was practically nonexistent. Then, after Hurricane Frederic struck in 1970 and the coast began to rebuild, development accelerated, and it hasn’t shown any signs of slowing down since.

Now there’s every kind of resorting you can fathom as well as a wide array of activities that are perfect for families. Meanwhile, the Hangout Music Festival and other events, along with attractions like The Wharf, are drawing a new generation to this coast.

The Lodge at Gulf State Park, a Hilton property opened to wide acclaim in 2018 and is noteworthy for its level of style and comfort and also for its commitment to both conservation and sustainability. Among the on-site restaurants at the lodge are the Gulf-front Porch and Foodcraft.

Venture out of the park and follow repeat visitors to breakfast at places like Ruby Slipper Cafe, Brick & Spoon, and Duck’s Diner. The same crowd will likely recommend lunching at decades-old Sea-N-Suds right on the beach. Doe’s Seafood Shack & Oyster Bar, Tacky Jacks, Miller’s Seafood, Original Oyster House. The Gulf (pair any dish with a martini), or Lucy Buffett’s LuLu’s (order The “Pa-Monna” Cheeseburger. For dinner? Don’t miss Cobalt, The Restaurant or Fishers at Orange Beach Marina for stunning views of the water. Fill any gaps in your itinerary with “You won’t believe this!” selfies while you sip on a beachy beverage at the Flora-Bama.

THE TOP 10

1. Gulf Shores/Orange Beach
2. Hilton Head Island, SC
3. Tybee Island, GA
4. Destin, FL
5. Myrtle Beach, SC
6. Key West, FL
7. Panama City Beach, FL
8. Wrightsville Beach, NC
9. Isle of Palms, SC
10. St. Augustine, FL

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BEST BOOKSTORE

Literary Treasure

Check out E. Shaver, Bookseller, a Savannah institution that's a must visit for anyone in search of their next great read.

BY CAROLINE ROGERS

No. 1

E. Shaver, Bookseller
Savannah, GA

On a sleepy downtown block next to an oak-shaded square a blue door opens to a labyrinth of nooks, rooms, and shelves stuffed with books of all persuasions. There are steps leading up and down. Narrow doorways nudge visitors into shell

lined alley. It's a little bit wobbly, somewhat creepy, and utterly perfect. E. Shaver, Bookseller, makes its home in a building erected in the 1860s by Eliza Jewett, one of the few female builders in the city at the time. Over the years, it has been enclosed, expanded, and gently shaped into its current form, and it now features many shelves of books, stationary, and gifts: a charming tearoom, and three rather regal shop cats: Bartlety, Skizzlebeans, and Mr. Elliot. (He has a poet's disposition.) Says owner Jessica Osborne, "pad across carpets, disappear around corners, and bask in warm windowwalls amid the displays. E. Shaver is what all the great bookshops are places filled with possibility. They invite you in to wander awhile, to happen upon something unexpected on a tucked-away shelf, in the pages of a book that you slide off its perch and thumb through quietly, led by your own curiosity and a touch of luck. When I visited on a busy Saturday morning in December, I took two turns, was immediately lost, and had no intention of being found—for several hours at least.

BEST READ: "RETURNING TO THE BEACH" This novel by Seward, Tennessee, author Kevin Wilson is "a beautiful and wild ride" and "the story of unlikely love and family," says Osborne. "It's compulsively readable. dark, funny, and poignant.

I KNOW a lot about garden centers, I worked at a big one before Southern Living convinced me to move to Alabama and become a living legend. I weeded on customers, unloaded trucks, and passed around a bottle of Wild Turkey bourbon with the other guys selling cut Christmas trees out in 34-degree weather in the rain.

In passing my days, I learned why some nurseries thrive as others fail. Based on our survey results, you value the same qualities I do, awarding Tallahassee Nurseries the top honor. This 52-year-old favorite offers an expansive selection of plants and flowers along with landscape design services and a coffee shop serving cold brew coffee, beer, and wine—-even wine slushies. What else makes a winner? Here are Grumpy's six suggestions.

1. CHEERY WELCOME

Nothing makes me want to scour through a garden center's parking lot more than tables and benches filled with idyllic rows of colorful plants I can set out today. So, nursery people, put your eyepoppers out front; keep displays filled; move tired plants to the back somewhere; never show me wilted, dying, or dead ones. That proves you don't care.

2. GOOD SELECTION

Why would I stop at your place for commodity plants when I can buy them at the big boxes for less? Offer lots of options that the mega stores don't, such as dwarf Japanese maples, native strawberries, and angelfish begonias. And don't forget houseplants! Those young housewives with empty rooms are really into them.

3. ALREADY DEFINED AREAS

I'm a busy person with no time to search the state for what I want. Put the sun plants in one section and the shade lovers in another.

4. KNOWLEDGEABLE, FRIENDLY STAFF

This is the number one wish of new gardeners, who can't bear the thought of failure. Help them pick out the right plant. Then tell them how to grow it, what else they can put it with, and which types of container will work best.

5. LARGE PROPERLY

I hate having to ask the cost of a plant, in case it's much more than I want to pay. That's embarrassing, so I'll just leave it there. I will, however, buy one that's mistakenly priced lower than it should be. That's how garden centers learn.

6. PERSONAL SERVICE

Helping people load their vehicles and putting down paper to keep car interiors clean is a given. Now go the extra mile by publishing an email newsletter, offering customers a "wish list" to record requested plants that aren't in stock so you can call them when they are and always greet folks with a smile—even when you're stuck selling Christmas trees at 34 degrees in the rain.

BEST GARDEN SHOP

If Grumpy Ran a Garden Shop

Six secrets that separate the gems from the duds

BY STEVE BENDER

1. TALLAHASSEE NURSERIES (Tallahassee, FL)

2. The Nook (St. Simons, GA)

3. Abide A White Garden (Mount Pleasant, SC)

4. Leaf & Petal (Birmingham, AL)

5. Atlantic Gardening Company (Raleigh, NC)

6. Garden District (Memphis, TN)

7. Meridian Garden Center (Gainesville, SC)

8. Clay (Santa Rosa, FL)

9. The Plant Gallery (New Orleans, LA)

10. Garvin Gardens (Washington, D.C.)
Weekend In Waco

Thanks to a pair of enterprising locals named Chip and Joanna, you can expect a great getaway in this once sleepy Texas college town

BY VALERIE FRASER LUESSER

SOME OF US Baylor University alumni remember when the only way you could be entertained in downtown Waco was to leave there and go to Dallas or Austin. But then along came the Gaines train, rolling into town.

"Before, we might have had somewhere between 400,000 and 500,000 visitors a year," says Carla Pendergraft, director of marketing for the Waco Convention & Visitors Bureau. "Now we're at 2.5 million, with 1.6 million going to Magnolia Market at the Silos." The market likely sees even more traffic than that because it doesn't track all the visitors who come for pop-up events outside but don't go in.

"Chip and Jo" as they're affectionately known, both grew up in Texas and graduated from Baylor before becoming HGTV sensations and sparking a dramatic urban renaissance in their Central Texas hometown. There's so much going on now that Waco Transit has created a free trolley to ferry the downtown crowds from here to there and a shuttle to LaSalle Avenue/Waco Traffic Circle to take you to Magnolia Table, housed in the former Elite Cafe.

Located on Webster Avenue, Magnolia Market at the Silos has expanded into a full-blown Silos District with all kinds of shopping and dining nearby. In addition to the market, the Gaineses' property includes a game lawn, a garden, a bakery, a battalion of

THE TOP 10

1. Magnolia Market at the Silos
2. The Paris Market and Biscuit (Savannah, GA)
3. Draper James (Nashville, TN)
4. White's Mercantile (Nashville, TN)
5. The Art of Simple (Seaside, FL)
6. shopCAG (Savannah, GA)
7. The Hour (Alexandria, VA)
8. Hampden (Charleston, SC)
9. PW Short General Store (Savannah, GA)
10. Rifle Paper Co. (Winter Park, FL)

food trucks, and most recently, the highly lauded Magnolia Press Coffee Co. According to Pendergraft, a $10.4 million expansion at the Silos is set to include a new furniture market for Joanna's line: a Willie hall field (modeling to Kary Park, which used to be here), and pop-ups. A decommissioned historic church is being moved to the location, giving visitors a quiet sanctuary for reflection, meditation, and prayer.

Just a few blocks away, the long-abandoned Karem Shrine, an architectural gem, will be converted into a 60-room boutique hotel: Chip and Jo style— with a planned restoration of its gorgeous chandelier and the addition of balconies on the second floor. Scads of new lodging options in Waco include Hyatt Place (which is already open), as well as a Tru by Hilton and Aloft (now under construction). Waco has additional proposed hotels by Marriott, Embassy Suites, and others in the works.

Back on the Baylor Bear stomping grounds, the opening of McLean Stadium on the Brazos River has given fans the option of arriving to football games by boat and "sailing" before kickoff. While you're on campus, snap photos of the striking Shells and Walter Umphrey Law Center on the river; the Armstrong Browning Library, which is truly a work of art; and the Riverwalk, winding from campus (near McClane Stadium) to Cameron Park. It passes beneath Waco's pedestrian Suspension Bridge, soon to be renovated. At the bridge, take lots of selfies next to Brindling the Brazos, bronze sculptures created by artist Robert Summers' depicting a cattle drive on the historic Chisholm Trail.

PLAN YOUR TRIP

CHECK IT OUT

Spice Village, a great collection of boutiques in the 1908 McLendon Hardware Co. building; the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum; the updated Hippodrome Theatre; Balcones Distilling; Waco Mammoth National Monument; and Texas Peddler Trails

LITE & DEUX

Lake Jane's for fresh breakfasts; chef Corey McIntyre's elevated Southern food at Mito; All Day; D'z Mediterranea Grill; Thanh and Phong Le's Clay Pot for Vietnamese cooking; old-school burgers at Cupp's Drive Inn (open since 1947); milkshakes that no straw can handle at Health Camp, on the Circle since 1949; Kiko's burgers and veggie fare; still more serious burgers and pizza at Bubba's 33; Gucci Family Barbeque; Kiko's (since 1915) for the "Gut Pinks," a legendary Frito pie incarnation; Hecho en Waco for Mexican fare; Koko Ramen at Union Hall; blue pizzas at Jake's Texas Tea House; and George's (since 1930), serving pub food and a fistful of beer that Baylor students back in the day dubbed "The Big Oranges," shortened to "The Big O"
The barbecue operation has spun off several beloved side businesses, including Southern-themed restaurant The Coop, the Sweet Shop bakery, and the 4 Rivers Caricama Barbecue Food Truck (Mexican barbecue fest). They operate concession stands at ESPN’s Wide World of Sports Complex and three football stadiums around Florida, with plans to expand. Their menus even more barbecue fans will have a chance to sample all the innovative offerings that made 4 Rivers our 2020 readers’ pick for the best in the South.

THE T的距离 Top

1. 4 Rivers Smokehouse
2. Wiley’s Championship BBQ
3. Durham’s Soul Barbecue
4. Dreamland Bar-B-Que
5. Lexington Barbecue
6. Fox Bros. Bar-B-Q
7. Central BBQ
8. Burton Hall Barbecue
9. Home Team BBQ
10. The Swell Barbecue & Blues Joint

There are a few standout barbecue spots in each state, but the list below captures some of the most notable in each region.

BEST BBQ JOINTS IN EVERY STATE

NEW ORLEANS
The Joint

In the Bayou St. John neighborhood lies The Joint, part of a crop of restaurants now upping the ante on New Orleans barbecue game. Custom steel smokers turn out brisket, baby back ribs, and chicken. Smoked cheddar pork sausage, smothered with jalapeños and garlic, offers a Cajun touch.

OCEAN SPRINGS
Wiley’s Championship BBQ

This popular pit, located on U.S. 80, has everything from pulled pork and chicken to brisket and burnt ends. Fans love the Redneck Nachos with house-made potato chips.

PULLMAN
Starnes Barbecue

Pulaski

Starnes is just a bit off the beaten path, but it’s a genuine Kentucky classic. The concrete block walls of the low-slung building are painted vivid orange and pink, and you can grab a stool at the U-shaped counter. The pork sandwiches here are simple but extraordinary, with finely chopped meat tucked between two slices of freshly baked white bread. Believe it or not, the smoked bologna sandwich is even better.

TUSCALOOSA
Dreamland Bar-B-Que

Tuscaloosa

Ribs are the name of the game here. They’re long and lean and have a wonderful chewy texture and crisp bits of hair around the edges. There are at least 5 locations in three states, but the Tuscaloosa original is an undisputed Alabama icon.

MEMPHIS
Pappy’s Smokehouse

St. Louis

The barbecue here might be more Memphis style, but glistening racks of ribs and overcooked sandwiches have earned Pappy’s the nod as the best barbecue joint in Missouri. They cook it fresh and often sell out by midafternoon.

ASHEVILLE
Buxton Hall Barbecue

Asheville

Since 2015, Buxton Hall has won over fans with its wood-fired whole hog, dog-friendly sidewalk, picnic tables, and barrel-aged beer. The setting—a 1925 former roller-skating rink—is one of a kind, and the food is exceptional. The pulled pork sandwich, with a slather of house-made sauce, is one of the best in the South. The barbecue here is a mix of classic Carolina-style and Southern-style, with a focus on whole-beef brisket and smoked pork.

NOVA SCOTIA
Oklahoma Joe’s Bar-B-Q

Stittsville

Joe Davidson built a booming company that manufactures barbecue smokers, but the company branched out in 1994 to open a few restaurant locations, including one in Stittsville, where the food is just as good as the equipment. The brisket is slow-cooked to perfection, and the ribs are fall-off-the-bone tender. The macaroni and cheese is a must-try, and the homemade bread is some of the best you’ll find in Canada.
A Toast to the Top Ten
You'll find everything from sustainable wines to tikl drinks at these reader favorites

BY ZOE DENENBERG

No. 1
Alley Cat Lounge
Savannah, GA
A newspaper-like menu features over 150 cocktails, along with lots of helpful commentary guiding you from sweet to sour and offering suggestions to suit your taste. You can even choose a drink based on your astrological sign.

No. 2
The Living Room at The Dewberry
Charleston, SC
This is not your ordinary hotel bar—and it has James Beard Award semifinalist status to prove it. From a carefully curated library to luxe sofas imported from Denmark, each detail makes the space feel like home. Signature drinks include the Dark as Night, described as the "nightcap of nightcaps."

No. 3
The Jasper
Richmond, VA
Named after iconic early 19th-century Richmond bartender Jasper Crouch, this place is serious about cocktails. Try the Caribbean Kween, and snack on the Togarashi Popcorn.

No. 4
Black Bear Bar Room
Grayton Beach, FL
Pair a natural wine with a tray of farm-raised oysters or house-made sourdough from sister cafe Black Bear Bread Co. next door.

No. 5
Saint-Germain
New Orleans, LA
Serving top-rated wines without the white-tablecloth formality, Saint-Germain channels the breezy spirit of a French bistro in the Bywater neighborhood.

No. 6
The Fox Bar & Cocktail Club
Nashville, TN
Considering the 1920s glamour of this spot (think blue velvet booths, sleek gold detailing, and quilted leather armchairs), you'd never guess that it has a cult following for its vegan pimento cheese.

No. 7
The Expat
Athens, GA
This two-story bungalow brings sustainable wine, French bites, and classic cocktails to Athens. Dine on fougasse and escargot at the downstairs restaurant, or settle in for a daiquiri in the upstairs lounge.

No. 8
The Atomic Bar & Lounge
Birmingham, AL
At random moments, bubbles fall from the ceiling at this eclectic Magic City haunt. Cozy up in one of the secluded alcoves for date night, or gather a group of friends and take advantage of the loan-out costumes.

No. 9
Columbia Room
Washington, D.C.
Sip in style at this D.C. hot spot that celebrates the art of the cocktail. Indulge in an intimate dining experience in the Tasting Room or order a Grasshopper Jule in the Spirits Library; or start a night out in the luscious Punch Garden.

No. 10
Ticonderoga Club
Atlanta, GA
At this Colonial-style bar, hidden inside Atlanta's Kr Street Market, enjoy terracotta plates, bold cocktails, and boisterous bartenders.
BEST DIVE BARS
These come-one, come-all joints invite you to have a cold one and stay awhile.

NO. 1
GREEN PARROT BAR
Key West, FL
A self-proclaimed “sunny place for shady people,” the Green Parrot is a Key West institution. Live music could include anything from a 10-piece Latin-funk group to a band playing hits by The Beatles. You just never know how your visit to this island joint will go—and that’s really the fun of it.

NO. 2
SURF BAR
Folly Beach, SC
This homey beach bar, just a stone’s throw from the shore, is an ideal oasis from the heat. There’s a steady rotation of surf movies playing above the wooden bar, where you can unwind with an afternoon tiki cocktail (try Surf Bar’s house favorite, a Pain Killer spiked with Gosling’s Rum).

NO. 3
PORT OF CALL
New Orleans, LA
The French Quarter dive is known for its burger, which Port of Call proudly touts as the best in the city. Have one with Neptune’s Monsoon, a specialty drink with two types of rum, tropical juices, and passion fruit.

NO. 4
THE GRIFFON
Charleston, SC
Charleston is probably the last place you’d expect to find a pub where dollar bills are the decor and The Rolling Stones play on repeat, but we promise it’s there.

NO. 5
NOWHERE BAR
Athens, GA
Two essentials mark a good dive bar: pool tables and live music. Nowhere Bar has both, drawing in large crowds with a cavernous, red-lit stage, where a tuxedo-clad statue of the Georgia Dawgs mascot, Uga, stands guard.

NO. 6
DIXIE CHICKEN
College Station, TX
A hotbed for Texas A&M University students, locals, and alumni, this beloved watering hole is as storied as they get. Its walls are adorned with retro 1970s beer signs, and the Dixie Chicken has seen everything from college reunions to marriage proposals.

NO. 7
THE BACKSTREET PUB
Beaufort, NC
Housed in a former bakery built in 1881, Backstreet is a fun vintage establishment frequented by locals. On sunny afternoons, enjoy live music on the outdoor patio.

NO. 8
EARNESTINE & HAZEL’S
Memphis, TN
It has had many past lives—a pharmacy, a beauty salon, and a restaurant, just to name a few. Today Earnestine & Hazel’s is one of Memphis’ favorite dives, famous for its Soul Burger, a great jukebox, and the ghosts that supposedly haunt the place.

NO. 9
NO NAME PUB
Big Pine Key, FL
This Florida landmark planted its roots in the 1930s, when it started out as a general store/bait-and-tackle shop. The legendary pizza recipe, which dates back nearly 60 years, is preserved (scrawled) on the kitchen wall.

NO. 10
THE GARAGE
Birmingham, AL
Snag a picnic table on the cool, tree-shaded patio at this tucked-away treasure trove that’s known for its build-your-own sandwiches and local beer. Be prepared: It’s cash only.

-Zoe Denenberg
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**BEST NEW HOTEL**

**A Signature Stay in the Holy City**

Luxury meets local charm at this reimagined property in Charleston.

BY ZOE DENEENBERG

IN THE SOUTH, even the locations we call “new” may not be entirely so. They are very often rooted in the old—vintage garages converted into restaurants or crumbling department stores transformed into vibrant, thriving community centers.

The story of one of Charleston, South Carolina’s latest hotels, The Dewberry, begins with the L. Mendel Rivers Federal Building, originally commissioned by John F. Kennedy in 1963. After 35 years as government offices, it suffered extensive hurricane damage. Preservationist and developer John Dewberry then purchased the site at auction and transformed what was once a boxy cubicle maze into a luxury stay. Guided by the philosophy “Southern Reimagined,” the design team chose each detail with thoughtful nods to history.

Some of those ties are obvious: Upon checking in, you’re greeted with a glass of Dewberry Tea (served hot in the winter, cold in the summer). Others are more subtle. Like the brass map of the Holy City hung near the elevators—It was crafted by Peyton Averett, whose grandmother worked in the original federal building.

Southern hospitality is woven into the fabric of the hotel. Guest suites, which feature panoramic views of the city, are outfitted with velvet couches and custom mahogany-and-linen armoires. Minibars are stocked with local snacks and spirits. Henrietta’s, the hotel brasserie, combines a wraparound porch.

After exploring the city on one of the hotel’s blue bikes (or in a complimentary car), head up to the eighth-floor terrace. At the rooftop Citrus Club, sip on playful Caribbean-inspired drinks like the Tropical Icht, which comes with a miniature back scratcher. Relax, take in the view, and stay awhile.