

The Post and Courier  
**FOOD**  
SPECIAL SECTION

D1

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## Charleston's most influential restaurants and bars



ILLUSTRATION AND PHOTOS/STAFF

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Restaurant names have always fascinated us. There are acronyms, ampersands and apostrophes, and names that nod to family members or siblings. Some go through marketing firms and branding agencies; others are conjured up organically.

We wondered: What's behind the names of the Lowcountry's most influential restaurants and bars? And which establishments should represent each letter for their contribution to the city's past, present and future?

Each letter is named for a bar or restaurant, with more options listed as runners-up. The featured picks identify establishments that have played pivotal roles in the evolution of Charleston's food and beverage scene, in one way or another.

We've listed lively bars, casual mom-and-pops, iconic institutions and bucket-list dining destinations. Consider this A to Z guide your comprehensive look inside Charleston's restaurant and bar scene, one letter at a time.



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# A-Z: CHARLESTON RESTAURANT GUIDE

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FILE/STAFF

Elesaa Boone wraps a fried chicken sandwich for a takeout order at Bertha's Kitchen in North Charleston.



GAVIN MCINTYRE/STAFF

Bertha's Kitchen has been a staple in Union Heights and can be seen coming off Meeting Street in North Charleston.



GRACE BEAHM ALFORD/STAFF

Grouper served at Chubby Fish in Charleston.

## A.C.'s Bar & Grill

**American | \$ | 467 King St. | Downtown Charleston | acsbar.com**

A line snakes down the sidewalk outside A.C.'s Bar & Grill most weekend nights. Patrons waiting to enter the iconic dive aren't there because it's the trendiest joint on Upper King Street — it's a place that feels like a neighborhood bar, especially for College of Charleston students.

In a city speckled with quality dives — The Griffon Pub, Recovery Room Tavern, Cutty's, Burn's Alley — A.C.'s is one of the oldest at 37 years old.

After a fire burned its original location, A.C.'s moved to 467 King St. in 2000, part of the surge of redevelopment that was starting to trudge up King Street north of Marion Square. Many followed over the next decade, paving the way for the Upper King Street nightlife district to spawn and thrive.

In addition to its pool tables and affordable drinks, A.C.'s is one of few downtown establishments to serve food after midnight. On the menu are a dozen burgers, cheesesteaks, loaded french fries, nachos and more.

**Others:**

Acme Lowcountry Kitchen, Angel Oak Restaurant and Bar, Anson Restaurant, Athens Restaurant, Avondale Wine & Cheese, Azur

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## Bertha's Kitchen

**Southern | \$ | 2332 Meeting Street Road | North Charleston**

For over 40 years, Bertha's Kitchen has epitomized the family-owned and -operated restaurant model. Julia Grant and Linda Pinckney's devotion to Bertha's Kitchen — first opened by their mother Albertha Grant in the Neck Area of the peninsula in 1981 — has meant long days and late nights of diligent work.

Yet Grant and Pinckney have continued to hand-make their mother's iconic dishes: lima beans over white rice, okra soup, macaroni and cheese, fried chicken and pork chops. Fresh collard greens and barbecue ribs are a hit as Thursday specials, and recently more guests have been sampling baked chicken or turkey wings.

Walking inside the North Charleston soul food institution during a crowded lunch service, it's easy to see the immense impact the family's hands-on approach has had on the community.

**Others:**

Babas, Baba Kabob Market and Deli, Big John's Tavern, Bintü Atelier, Baguette Magic, Basic Kitchen, Bar George, Beautiful South, Berkeley's, Bessinger's BBQ, Bistronomy By Nico, Blind Tiger Pub, Bodega, Brasserie La Banque, Brown Dog Deli



HENRY TAYLOR/STAFF

People line up for A.C.'s Bar and Grill in downtown Charleston.

## Chubby Fish

**Seafood | \$\$\$ | 252 Coming St. | Downtown Charleston | chubbyfishcharleston.com**

Chubby Fish does not accept reservations, drawing crowds of guests and at least one man willing to stand in line on your behalf for \$50. It's well worth the wait for a seat inside the 1,250-square-foot restaurant, where chef James London wows guests with dynamic fresh-off-the-dock-driven offerings.

The Coming Street restaurant's name hints at its seafood focus while juxtaposing its pint-sized space, which holds about 40 guests. Surprise after pleasant surprise awaits on the menu, hand-lettered on black magnetic strips and affixed to a broad metal board above the small counter in the back.

When the colorful antique dishware — curated by London's wife Yoanna, who goes by "YoYo" — starts arriving, a wave of energy sweeps across the table as your eyes register what's on them. Buttery blue crab tagliatelle is spotted with trout roe. Fall-off-the-bone charred lamb ribs rest on romesco. Grilled oysters are doused in crab fat curry and sprinkled with puffed rice. The list goes on.

**Others:**

Callie's Hot Little Biscuit, Charleston Grill, Chez Nous, Circa 1886, Circe's Grotto, City Lights Eastside, Cleats, The Co-Op Frose & Eatery, Coast Brewing Co., Cocktail Club, The CODfather, Cold Shoulder Gourmet, Costa, Coda Del Pesce, Colectivo, Common-house Aleworks, Cru Cafe

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ANDREW J. WHITAKER/STAFF

From the dessert menu the lime cream puffs at FIG.



GRACE BEAHM ALFORD/STAFF

EVO Pizza.



GRACE BEAHM ALFORD/STAFF

Zach and Alexa Hamby catch lunch at EVO Pizza in the Park Circle neighborhood Wednesday, April 10, 2019, in North Charleston.



ANDREW J. WHITAKER/STAFF

FIG in downtown Charleston was previously nominated for a James Beard Award in the Outstanding Restaurant category.



FILE/STAFF

Folded egg sandwich with cheese at Daps Breakfast & Imbibe.

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### Daps Breakfast & Imbibe

**Brunch | \$\$ | 280 Ashley Ave. | Downtown Charleston**

Daps opened in March 2018, and it's been busy ever since. As casual as the place might seem, owner Jeremiah Schenzel and his team are very serious about the food they're putting out during breakfast, lunch and brunch.

The restaurant's list of local purveyors starts with Fili-West Farms, a Vance poultry farm that brings Schenzel 200 dozen eggs each week. King Tide Farms, One Love Kombucha and Lowcountry Fungi are among the list of other small-batch producers incorporated into the menu at Daps.

Daps brings the breakfast noise six days a week, serving whimsical Fruity Pebbles pancakes, hearty platters, burritos and a chick-pea sandwich with sweet sorghum Duke's Mayonnaise inside a fluffy English muffin.

How did Daps get its name? When Schenzel and his former business partner Nick Dowling conceived the concept for the restaurant, they started spitballing ideas.

They found that dap is the Latin word for "sacrificial" or "feast." It also denotes a neighborly handshake, making it a fitting title for the West Side joint.

**Others:**

Da Toscano Porchetta Shop, The Daily, Dalila's, The Darling Oyster Bar, D'Allesandro's Pizza, Delaney Oyster House, Doar Bros

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### EVO Pizzeria

**Pizza | \$\$ | 1075 E. Montague Ave. | North Charleston | evopizza.com**

EVO Pizzeria has been bringing a cheffy approach to wood-fired pizza in Park Circle since 2007. Matt McIntosh and Ricky Hacker, who met while working at FIG, started the business in a food trailer equipped with a wood-fired oven, a model that Dough Boyz and other Charleston area pop-ups have mirrored since.

EVO — which stands for Extra Virgin Oven — is now known as one of the area's pioneering pizzerias, and many consider it a top 25 Charleston restaurant. Pizzas like the Pork Trifecta with red sauce, house-made sausage, pepperoni, bacon, mozzarella and Parmigiano-Reggiano push past tradition in stunning fashion.

**Others:**

Edmund's Oast, El Molino Supermarket, Estadio, The Establishment, Euro Foods Bakery and Cafe



FILE/STAFF

Apple Jack pancakes at Daps Breakfast & Imbibe.

### FIG

**Southern | \$\$\$ | 232 Meeting St. | Charleston | eatatfig.com**

Mike Lata and Adam Nemirow walked into Vincenzo's Ristorante on Dec. 31, 2002, to sign a lease that would contribute to an important shift in Charleston's dining scene.

A mere five months later, in April 2003, FIG opened in the single-story space at the corner of Meeting and Hasell streets. A decade after that, the Holy City became a dining destination with country-wide intrigue. FIG, which stands for "Food is Good," played a huge role in that evolution.

These days, a seat inside the restaurant is just as coveted as it was when Lata was crowned Best Chef: Southeast by the James Beard Awards in 2009. In a 2023 restaurant review, contributing critic Robert F. Moss was impressed by the sauces and accents that adorn locally sourced ingredients — brown butter, bordelaise, romesco and béarnaise. They hew toward the classic, and though intensely flavored, they're consistently applied with a light touch, he wrote.

"With two decades under its belt, the restaurant is firing on all cylinders, and the food remains as impressive and relevant as ever," Moss wrote. "FIG has always been on my short list of the city's must-visit fine dining restaurants. Now, it's at the very top."

**Others:**

Fast and French, Felix Cocktails et Cuisine, Frannie and the Fox



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A Lowcountry take on Oyster Rockefeller using collards instead of spinach at Glass Onion.

FILE/STAFF



Red rice, okra soup and fried whiting served at Hannibal's.

GRACE BEAHM ALFORD/STAFF

**The Glass Onion**

Southern | \$\$ | 1219 Savannah Highway | West Ashley | [ilovetheglassonion.com](http://ilovetheglassonion.com)

Wooden tables covered with brown paper are topped with a miniature flower arrangement in a mason jar at this West Ashley restaurant that opened in 2008.

Folk rock plays over the speakers, local art hangs from white brick walls. Pitchers of iced tea wait to be drained near the front of the restaurant, and more than a dozen press clippings from *Saveur*, *Travel + Leisure* and others hang near the restroom.

Welcome to The Glass Onion, which — like the 2022 movie starring Daniel Craig — is named after a 1968 Beatles song. With an offering reliant on local farmers and purveyors, the daily-changing menu at The Glass Onion features Southern favorites like Cajun catfish balls, a fried green tomato po'boy and gumbo.

The prices at Glass Onion don't appear to have caught up with the times. A lunch portion of Manchester Farm quail will run you just \$13, while the full order costs \$26. Shrimp toast is \$2.

**Others:**

The Griffon Pub, [goat.sheep.cow](http://goat.sheep.cow), The Grocery, Graft Wine Shop

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**Hannibal's Kitchen**

Southern | \$ | 16 Blake St. | Downtown Charleston | [hannibalkitchen.com](http://hannibalkitchen.com)

Safiya Grant and her sister are third-generation managers of the restaurant their grandfather Robert Lawrence Huger — whose nickname was Hannibal — opened in the East Side neighborhood of downtown Charleston in 1985.

A local favorite, Hannibal's Kitchen made a 2021 list by The New York Times detailing the top 50 places in America the paper is "most excited about right now."

Grant says her father, L.J. Huger, came up with the crab rice recipe that is the subject of most of Hannibal's press clippings. But the restaurant's big jumble of blue crab meat with a bed of steamed white rice is just one of many adored entrees at the soul food kitchen. Patrons have also grown fond of shrimp and grits, fried whiting, ribs and okra soup.

**Others:**

Halls Chophouse, Hank's, Harbinger Cafe & Bakery, Heavy's Barburger, Henry's On The Market, Herd Provisions, High Wire Distilling, Holey City Bagels, Holy City Brewing, Home Team BBQ, Honeysuckle Rose, Huriyali, Husk

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**Istanbul Shish Kabob Restaurant**

Mediterranean | \$ | 4940 Centre Point Drive | North Charleston | [istanbulshishkabob.com](http://istanbulshishkabob.com)

This North Charleston restaurant is named after a city in Turkey. But patrons of the casual eatery near the North Charleston Coliseum can expect to find a wide range of Middle Eastern dishes.

"Like, I'm mixed," owner Emad Hammad told The Post and Courier in 2017. "My father is from Jerusalem, my mother is Turkish, and I was born and raised in Jordan. So we grab the best from every country."

What does that look like? Cooks in an open kitchen churn out plates of fragrant char-grilled kabobs, lamb racks, kofta and chicken shawarma, as piping hot house-made bread splits out of a toaster oven-looking contraption near the cash register. Families break said bread to scoop up hummus made with tahini shipped from Lebanon or thinly sliced lamb served with saffron-scented basmati rice.

It's hard to argue with the combination of chicken shawarma, pita and garlic sauce. But for me, nothing beats the lamb with a chunky spread Hammad says is made with Aleppo pepper paste, lemon and walnuts.

**Others:**

Iggy's Pizza Shop, Indaco, Islander 71, Island Cabana Bar



Harrison Sedelbauer (from left) and Jessica Olin share dinner at the bar sitting next to Al



Crab rice and collards served at Hannibal's Kitchen in Charleston.



FILE/STAFF

Lamb rack (from foreground), Turkish chicken kabob, Kofta ground beef kabob, and beef kabob.



Erika Selheim in North Cha

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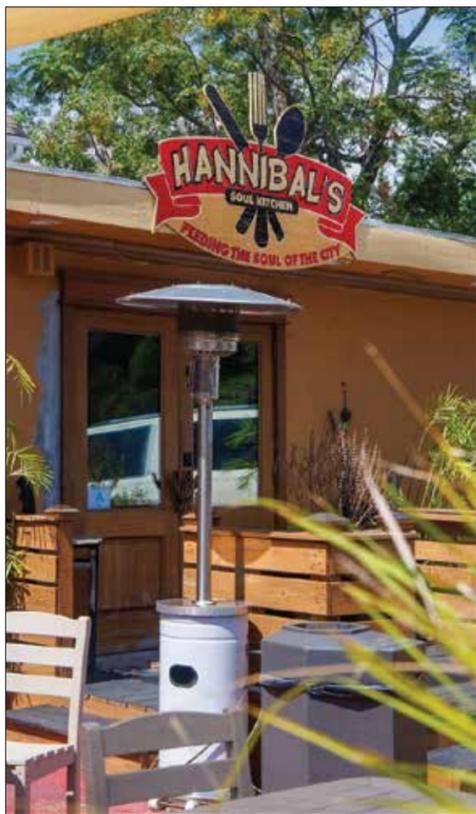


HENRY TAYLOR/STAFF

Alex Amick and Jessie Gravino at Kultura in Charleston.



GRACE BEAHM ALFORD/STAFF



GRACE BEAHM ALFORD/STAFF



ANDREW J. WHITAKER/STAFF

Singapore fried rice with the house maple ham, local shrimp, sweet peas, carrots, pineapple and buttermilk curry aioli at the Jackrabbit Filly.

## Jackrabbit Filly

Chinese American | \$\$ | 4628 Spruill Ave. | North Charleston | [jackrabbitfilly.com](http://jackrabbitfilly.com)

Named after owners Shuai and Corrie Wang's Chinese zodiac animals, Jackrabbit Filly is my go-to gift card purchase for food lovers. It's the place my family requests when visiting, and the restaurant I choose when looking for Chinese American cuisine that's unlike anything else I've experienced in the South.

Spawned from the couple's wildly popular Short Grain food truck-turned-pop-up, Jackrabbit Filly seamlessly blends Chinese and American cuisine in a casual and lively setting, with dishes like karaage, dumplings, fish tartare and drunken egg noodles.

### Others:

Jack of Cups Saloon, Jack's Cosmic Dogs, The James, Jasmine Thai Kitchen

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## Kultura

Filipino | \$\$ | 73 Spring St. | Downtown Charleston | [kulturacharleston.com](http://kulturacharleston.com)

Kultura is an extension of Mansueta's pop-up, named after the grandmother who taught chef Nikko Cagalan how to cook. Born in Bacolod in the Philippines, Cagalan owns the restaurant with his wife and Baguette Magic co-owner Paula Kramer.

Kultura is the Filipino word for "culture," an apt name for a place that strives to share "good food and the roots of the people who make it."

Patrons can cut into long strips of rosy yellowfin tuna dressed in strawberry nước chấm and colored with preserved lemon. Minced Peculiar Pig Farm pork, jolted by ginger and brightened by mint, and roasted red snapper, slathered in a red curry sauce that could be eaten alone with a spoon, might follow.

And then there's the arroz caldo, a Filipino porridge that's on my Mount Rushmore of top dishes in Charleston. Each bite of the risotto-like rice is as good as the next — the crunch of fried garlic and house-made chili crisp dominating one, and the creamy yolk of a soft-cooked egg taking over another.

### Others:

Kanpai Japanese Restaurant, King BBQ, Kwei Fei



GAVIN MCINTYRE/STAFF

... smiles as Sarah O'Kelley pours her a glass of wine at Istanbul Shish Kebab restaurant in Charleston.

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GAVIN MCINTYRE/STAFF

Maison's onion soup croquette.



GAVIN MCINTYRE/STAFF

Mushroom tart is served at Maison in Charleston.



Lewis Barbecue in Charleston is widely acclaimed for its Central Texas-style barbecue and sides.



FILE/STAFF

## Lewis Barbecue

Barbecue | \$\$ | 464 N. Nassau St. | Downtown Charleston | [lewisbarbecue.com](http://lewisbarbecue.com)

There's an art to naming barbecue restaurants, according to Post and Courier contributing restaurant critic Robert F. Moss, who in 2018 pointed out that many barbecue restaurants utilize the owner's name. This holds true at Rodney Scott's, Bessinger's, Martin's, Melvin's, Jim 'N Nick's and Lewis Barbecue.

About a decade ago, pitmaster John Lewis left a barbecue business in Austin, Texas, to strike out on his own in Charleston. In wood-fired smokers he made with his father, Lewis and his team cook pulled pork, beef sausage, turkey and more at his barbecue emporium. Options are plentiful, but it's wise to sample the brisket — sliced or chopped and paired with fries and green chile corn pudding, or on top of nachos.

The restaurant has added a second location in Greenville and will expand beyond the state when Lewis Barbecue debuts in Atlanta at Ansley Mall in 2025.

**Others:**

La Bonne Franquette, La Pizzeria, Last Saint, Le Cave, Le Farfalle, Legame, Lenoir, Leon's Oyster Shop, Leyla, Lillian's, Little Jack's Tavern, Little Palm, Local 616, Lola Rose, The Longboard, Lost Dog Cafe, Lost Isle, Lowland

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## Maison

French | \$\$\$ | 708 King St. | Downtown Charleston | [maisoncharleston.com](http://maisoncharleston.com)

Translating to "house" or "home" in English, Maison stands alongside Chez Nous — which means "at our place" — as the area's top French eateries. At Maison, chef Vandy Vanderwarker's culinary efforts are paired with service that's decidedly hospitable.

The restaurant is housed in an odd-looking blueish-purple building on King Street. Enter by walking through a quiet patio, guarded by a mural of the Eiffel Tower. Inside, a slim alleyway passes a bar on the left and booths to the right before the room opens up in the back.

French onion soup croquettes and escargot laced with garlic, parsley and Dijon mustard-infused butter warm up your palate for what's to come with the main course: monkfish, steak frites au poivre or a gorgeously plated daily special.

Small details make the magic here. The staff might, for instance, place a small lamp on the table so an elderly couple doesn't have to shine their phones over the menu.

**Others:**

Ma'am Saab, Mama Kims, Marbled & Fin, Marina Variety Store, Martin's Bar-B-Que Joint, Magnolias, Malagón, Melfi's, Melvin's BBQ, Mercantile & Mash, Mex 1 Coastal Cantina, Millers All Day, Minero, Moe's Crosstown Tavern, MOMO Riverfront Park, Mozzo Deli, Muse



HENRY TAYLOR/STAFF

Tables fill up in the main dining room at Nigel's Good Food.

## Nigel's Good Food

Southern | \$ | Locations in Ladson and Hanahan | [nigelsgoodfood.com](http://nigelsgoodfood.com)

Nigel's Good Food is the place to go for soul food selections like fried pork chops and whiting, shrimp and grits, okra soup and fried green tomatoes. Owner Nigel Drayton is perhaps best known for his fried "Geechie Wings," which are tossed in a house-made sauce you can purchase in a bottle.

Nigel's Good Food became an instant hit when it opened in 2011, as North Charleston residents and downtown dwellers flocked to the new restaurant. Drayton stuck to his staples in the kitchen during the first year before eventually adding items like chicken and biscuits, Lowcountry ravioli and gumbo, which have since become customer favorites. The restaurant has two Charleston-area locations, in Ladson and Hanahan. Drayton also owns Slaughter House BBQ & Brew in Ladson and Nola's Creole and Soul in Summerville.

**Others:**

Nick's German Kitchen, NICO Oysters + Seafood

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FILE/STAFF

Pasta maker Brian Parkhurst winds through the busy prep kitchen in the basement of The Obstinate Daughter.

## The Obstinate Daughter

Southern | \$\$\$ | Sullivan's Island | 2063 Middle St. | [theobstinatedaughter.com](http://theobstinatedaughter.com)

The Obstinate Daughter's name is an ode to Sullivan's Island's history, specifically a victory by American soldiers over the British in 1776. The Revolutionary War battle inspired a political cartoon titled "Miss Carolina Sullivan — one of the obstinate daughters of America."

"This political cartoon and the significance of The Battle of Sullivan's Island is the inspiration for the restaurant's name," its owners wrote in an opening press release in 2013.

Perched on the second story behind a large live oak tree, the elegant sunlit setting at The Obstinate Daughter exudes a lively, approachable ambiance that is perfectly suited for Sullivan's Island.

Jacques Larson leads the kitchen, which looks out onto a dining room paneled — walls and ceiling — with sun-bleached wood. Dining at The Obstinate Daughter is relaxed enough for a casual catch-up with friends, but it's not a place that plays it safe. White anchovies, tomatoes, black olives, red onion, garlic and chile oil top one pizza, and black truffle is added to a warm salad of farro, chicken, peanuts and Brussels sprouts.

### Others:

O-Ku, Oak Steakhouse, Odd Duck Market, Off Track Ice Cream, The Ordinary



FILE/STAFF

The Obstinate Daughter is at 2063 Middle St. on Sullivan's Island.



In addition to our restaurant, Bowens Island offers catering events, from rehearsal parties and weddings to birthdays, business events and holiday parties.

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GRACE BEAHM ALFORD/STAFF

Rodney Scott works at Rodney Scott's Barbecue.



HENRY TAYLOR/STAFF

James Shingler (left) and Monique Shingler sit down for lunch at Palmira Barbecue in Charleston.

## Palmira Barbecue

**Barbecue | \$\$\$ | West Ashley | 2366 Ashley River Road | palmirabbq.com**

Hector Garate launched Palmira Barbecue as a pop-up three years ago, serving whole hog, beef cheeks and more at breweries, events and a food hall in the Lowcountry.

Lugging around an offset smoker, the Puerto Rican pitmaster built a brand serving high-end meats even before opening his brick-and-mortar restaurant in 2024.

A mix of two- and four-tops fill the modern but minimal space, whose walls are decorated with family photos and framed press clippings Garate has received since he launched Palmira Barbecue in 2021. A vintage Coca-Cola machine is tucked against the back wall behind a pillar holding a photo of Garate's grandmother, who grew up on a sustainable cattle ranch. Palmira Barbecue is named in her honor.

Guests can line up to place their orders on the left side of the long restaurant, next to where a review by Post and Courier contributing restaurant critic Robert F. Moss hangs on the wall. Once at the front of the line, beef cheeks, sausage links, pork ribs and Garate's signature whole hog barbecue are pulled out of a warming cabinet and placed on the scale before landing on a paper-lined red tray.

**Others:**

Paddock & Whisky, Page's Okra Grill, Palmetto Brewing Co., Park & Grove, Park Pizza Co., The Pass, Peninsula Grill, Pink Bel-lies, Pink Cactus, Pizza a Modo Mio, Poe's Tavern, Poogan's Porch, Post House

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## Queen Street Grocery

**Sandwiches | \$ | Downtown Charleston | 133 Queen St. | queenstreetgrocerycafe.com**

Queen Street Grocery has served the Harleston Village for the last 100 years. Patrons would swing by for fresh milk in the morning, and children would walk to the corner of Queen and Logan streets for candy and ice cream after school. In the evening, members of the neighborhood would drop by to watch the nightly news over a cold beer.

Today, the decor is colorful and the setting is cozy. Customers thank staff members — "the Queens" — for a sandwich well made, their baskets cleaned of classics with ham, goat cheese and avocado inside toasted ciabatta. Some days might bring Bill Murray in for his namesake crepe, prepared on the same circular griddle used to prepare eggs for breakfast sandwiches and omelets with feta, spinach, tomatoes and artichoke hearts.

Queen Street Grocery, owned by local actor Rob Bouton, represents a remnant from Charleston's past with fare firmly planted in the present. The shop shows that as Charleston's dining scene flourishes, the city still has a need for a classic corner store with prepared foods and a few provisions.

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## Rodney Scott's BBQ

**Barbecue | \$\$ | Downtown Charleston | 1011 King St. | rodneyscottsbbq.com**

Acclaimed pitmaster Rodney Scott serves up whole hog barbecue cooked over live coal direct heat at his popular namesake restaurant.

Patrons can be seen lining up daily for pork platters, ribs, smoked chicken wings and more at the King Street original, which has been replicated in other Southern cities since opening in 2017.

Scott, 53, grew up in the Pee Dee region of South Carolina. Inside Scott's Bar-B-Que, his parents' restaurant and variety store in Hemingway, Scott smoked his first whole hog at age 11. Since striking out on his own a few hours south, Scott has become one of the most recognizable chefs in Charleston. His local and national fame has come after winning a James Beard Award, being inducted into the Barbecue Hall of Fame, and appearing in shows on Netflix and Showtime.

**Others:**

Rancho Lewis, Rappahannock Oyster Bar, The Rarebit, Recovery Room Tavern, Red Drum, Renzo, Revelry Brewing Co., Royal American, The Royal Tern



GAVIN MCINTYRE/STAFF

Chairs and tables are set up outside Queen Street Grocery in Charleston.



ANDREW J. WHITAKER/STAFF

People dine for lunch at Slightly North of Broad in Charleston.

## Slightly North of Broad

**Southern | \$\$\$ | Downtown Charleston | 192 E. Bay St. | snobcharleston.com**

Slightly North of Broad's name is a nod to its location just north of Charleston's wealthiest neighborhood, South of Broad. When original owners Dick Elliott, David Marconi and chef Frank Lee came up with the moniker, Lee turned it into an acronym that's stuck to this day: SNOB.

Part of what brings people into SNOB — and keeps them coming back — is the staff's devotion to small details, like the complimentary cornbread, accompanied by three orbs of butter softened just enough to spread.

During a normal lunch service, fried chicken livers, shrimp and grits, steak frites, grilled salmon salads and cheeseburgers dot SNOB's tables. In the evening, diners watch as hunks of grilled swordfish and racks of lamb are ushered to tables throughout the sharply dressed dining room. As they prepare these and other dishes, chefs in SNOB's open kitchen can look out as guests take their first bites.

"The flavors are fresh and bold, the atmosphere relaxed but elegant. It's a great place to enjoy a well-choreographed meal with a nice glass of wine and a satisfying dessert," contributing restaurant critic Robert F. Moss wrote in a July review of the restaurant. "SNOB may now be slightly north of 30 years old, but to me it seems as relevant as ever."

**Others:**

Santi's, Share House, Shiki, Sightsee Shop, Sissy Bar, Southbound, Sorelle, Stella's, Stems & Skins, Sorghum & Salt, Sugar Bakeshop, Sullivan's Fish Camp, Sushi-Wa, Swig & Swine

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ANDREW J. WHITAKER/STAFF  
Chris Sumner watches his daughter Scarlett Sumner, 5, draw at the Tattooed Moose.



ANDREW J. WHITAKER/STAFF  
People dance to music with their beverages in hand at Uptown Social in Charleston.

## Tattooed Moose

American | \$\$ | Locations in North Charleston and Johns Island | [tattooedmoose.com](http://tattooedmoose.com)

Tattooed Moose opened in downtown Charleston in 2010; shortly after, the restaurant putting a gourmet spin on casual fare became a local favorite.



ANDREW J. WHITAKER/STAFF  
A server carries a tray of food at the Tattooed Moose in Park Circle in North Charleston.

A 2012 feature on Food Network's "Diners, Drive-Ins & Dives" placed the national spotlight on owners Mike and Jen Kulick. Their original Morrison Drive restaurant has closed, but the Tattooed Moose still operates at two Lowcountry locations — one on Johns Island and another in Park Circle.

Patrons can expect duck fat fries, jumbo chicken wings, a brunch burger, Porkstrami Reuben sandwich and more. Patrons can also order the sandwich that made the restaurant famous: Mike's Duck Club. The triple decker duck confit sandwich is topped with bacon, hickory smoked cheese, garlic aioli, lettuce, tomato and red onion and served on sweet Hawaiian bread.

**Others:**

Taco Boy, Tavern & Table, Taverna Philosophia, Tempest, The Tippling House, Three Little Birds Cafe, Tolti's Trattoria, Toni's Detroit Style Pizza, Torres Supperettes

## Uptown Social

Pizza | \$\$ | Downtown Charleston | 587 King St. | [uptownsocialchs.com](http://uptownsocialchs.com)

Before opening Uptown Social, owner Keith Benjamin and his partners came across a story in the Wall Street Journal about "Uptown." The newspaper called this part of downtown — more commonly referred to as North Central — the hottest neighborhood in Charleston.

The group's new bar was a little south of Rodney Scott's BBQ, Monarch Wine Merchants and other buzzy establishments mentioned in the article, but it was close enough. Partner Kara Hammond added the second word and Uptown Social was born.

Uptown Social is widely considered one of the top nightlife destinations in Charleston. The six-year-old establishment is also serious about its pizza.

When Keith Benjamin hired Anthony Falco, the former Roberta's pizza pro, as a consultant ahead of Uptown Social's opening, he wanted his multi-level Upper King Street bar to serve a replica of the thin-crust pie from Star Tavern in Orange, N.J., 15 miles from his hometown of Short Hills.

Falco flew down to Charleston — sourdough starter in tow — to create the thin and crispy pie the lively bar still serves today. During an interview in 2018, Falco told me that high-quality extra-virgin olive oil and King Arthur flour help form the crunchy bite for which Uptown Social's no-frills pies are now known.

**Others:**

Uncork Charleston

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# A-Z: CHARLESTON RESTAURANT GUIDE

postandcourier.com/AtoZ



GRACE BEAHM ALFORD/STAFF

The setting sun casts shadows at Vern's.



ANDREW J. WHITAKER/STAFF

Gnocchetti sari and walnut pesto is served at Vern's restaurant in Charleston.



GRACE BEAHM ALFORD/STAFF

Haley McCollin serves dishes at Xiao Bao Biscuit in Charleston.

## Vern's

**Modern American | \$\$\$ | Downtown Charleston | 41 Bogard St. | vernschs.com**

When people ask for a restaurant they should try in Charleston, Vern's immediately enters the conversation. Owned by Bethany and Daniel "Dano" Heinze, the highly anticipated restaurant opened in July 2022. The couple named the modern spot after Dano's grandfather Vern.

Food and wine work in harmony at the neighborhood bistro, where Bethany worked tirelessly to curate a wine list that celebrates small producers committed to organic and biodynamic practices.

Ask your server for help deciphering the list while glancing at the plates coming from the kitchen, such as tarragon butter sauce-soaked escargot and rabbit campanelli.

Two to three small plates, two pastas and two mains is a fantastic way for a group of three to four to enjoy an evening at Vern's, one of the toughest reservations to snag in Charleston.

**Others:**

Vicious Biscuit, Ville Sainte Bistro, Vintage Lounge, Virginia's on King

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## Wild Olive

**Italian | \$\$\$ | Johns Island | 2867 Maybank Highway | wildolive.com**

Wild Olive opened 15 years ago during the recession in an area not yet accustomed to upscale dining. But over the years, the Johns Island restaurant has demonstrated consistency and a commitment to excellence, which has endeared the Italian eatery to diners across the Charleston area.

Originally opened by former Fat Hen chef Fred Neuville, Wild Olive is where chef Jacques Larson of The Obstinate Daughter cemented himself as a star in the industry. The restaurant's longevity is a testament to its staff, led by longtime general manager Jason Parrish.

Seasonal cuisine and food-friendly wines reign supreme at Wild Olive, where patrons go for fresh-made pastas, steaks, scallops, swordfish and more. Many consider it the very best Italian restaurant in town.

**Others:**

Weltons Tiny Bakeshop, The Whale., Wild Common, WildFlour Pastry, Wine & Company, Wreck of the Richard & Charlene



HENRY TAYLOR/STAFF

Light rays split by branches of an oak shine over the sign and front facade of Wild Olive on Johns Island.

## Xiao Bao Biscuit

**Asian Fusion | \$\$\$ | Downtown Charleston | 224 Rutledge Ave. | xiaobaobiscuit.com**

Located in a former gas station and auto body shop at the corner of Rutledge Avenue and Spring Street, Xiao Bao Biscuit serves cuisine from Japan, Thailand, Vietnam, China and other East Asian countries. Those who have tasted the bold, spicy and complex flavors know that describing Xiao Bao Biscuit as a "fusion" restaurant would not even begin to do it justice.

Josh Walker and Duolan Walker-Li opened the restaurant in 2013 with a name that immediately stood out in the Lowcountry. It combined a nickname Walker-Li once had with the word "biscuit," a nod to Walker's parents' Southern upbringing.

"The biscuit was representative of those two things coming together," Walker said.

When Walker added restaurant locations in Charlotte and Nashville, Tenn., he dropped the "biscuit," simply calling both Xiao Bao. He made this decision because the two new spots are a continuation of what was started in Charleston.

**Others:**

XO Brasserie

## A-Z: CHARLESTON RESTAURANT GUIDE

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GAVIN MCINTYRE/STAFF

Zero George serves a myriad of dishes on its tasting menu, Thursday, Dec. 12, 2024, in Charleston.



GRACE BEAHM ALFORD/STAFF

Yous Guys Sandwich Shop owner Donald Strong on James Island.

### Yous Guys Sandwich Shop

Sandwiches | \$ | James Island | 827 Folly Road | [facebook.com/YousGuysSandwichShop/](https://www.facebook.com/YousGuysSandwichShop/)

The phrase “yous guys” shares its Philadelphia roots with Donald Strong, who opened this small Folly Road shop in 2018.

In addition to cheesesteaks and Italian hoagies, the menu has a slew of Parmesan subs, including meatball and chicken. Those proteins are enrobed in provolone cheese and red sauce, or “Sunday gravy,” as it’s called here. Housed inside a thick, seeded hoagie, these and other Italian subs are best with an extra side of that aromatic red sauce.

I wouldn’t suggest paying attention to Yous Guys’ online hours. When Strong sells out, he closes the door and shuts off the phone.

#### Others:

Ye Olde Fashioned Ice Cream

### Zero Restaurant + Bar

Modern American | \$\$\$\$ | Downtown Charleston | 0 George St. | [zerorestaurantcharleston.com](https://www.zerorestaurantcharleston.com)

Zero George’s restaurant and bar may cater to inn guests, but it’s also a sweet splurge spot for locals to check out at least once, if not quarterly, as the tasting menu changes with the seasons.

Stop by a crowded Zero Restaurant + Bar — named after the hotel’s address — for chef Vinson Petrillo’s multi-course meal featuring options like crab doughnuts, yellowfin tuna with Regiis Ova caviar, salmon with grilled peas and Hunter Cattle Farm beef and you will quickly notice that Charleston diners are again — post-pandemic — warming to the idea of spending money on chef’s choice tasting menus.

The Charleston porch vibes are exquisite, with a courtyard and willowy trees in view to boot. A floor lamp by the couch near the outdoor bar makes you feel like you’re in the comfort of your living room, even if you might be taking in a little more unavoidable road noise than you would at home.

### 167 Raw and 167 Sushi Bar

Seafood | \$\$\$ | Downtown Charleston | 193 King St. | [167rawoysterbar.com](https://www.167rawoysterbar.com)

Studying a list of top restaurants in Charleston is sure to produce 167 Raw. What started as a fish market with a small food program has morphed into one of the buzziest restaurants in Charleston. Favorites include the lobster roll, scallop po’ boy and daily changing selection of oysters, crudos and ceviches.

College of Charleston alumnus Jesse Sandole in 2014 opened the seafood house at 289 East Bay St. as an extension of his family’s seafood market at 167 Hummock Pond Road in Nantucket, Mass. Enthusiasm for 167 Raw remained high following a move to 193 King St. Sandole converted the original East Bay Street location into a successful sushi spot, 167 Sushi Bar, that earned a rave review from Post and Courier contributing restaurant critic Robert F. Moss.

Both of those restaurants have emerged with instant top hits leading a soundtrack of reimagined seafood salutes. For its part, 167 Sushi Bar has made waves by pairing an impressive nigiri program with bao buns, ramen and lobster fried rice.

#### Others:

82 Queen, 60 Bull Cafe, 39 Rue de Jean



ANDREW J. WHITAKER/STAFF

The dumplings with white shoyu and magic carpet at 167 Sushi Bar in Charleston.

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