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In Oxford, Mississippi, storytelling isn't confined to a page. Home to four MICHELIN Guide-recommended restaurants, Oxford's culinary scene is as layered and expressive as the literature that made it famous. Discover our charming town and savor the story being written on every plate.

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**gulf  
coast**

ALABAMA  
MISSISSIPPI  
FLORIDA



C/O THE GINNY BAR

The Ginny Bar at Little Bird  
Fairhope, Alabama

# alabama

BY JENNIFER KORNEGAY



**BEST CHEF**  
**Bill Briand**  
LITTLE BIRD  
*Fairhope*

After the 2023 closure of Fisher's in Orange Beach, fans of chef Bill Briand's thoughtful approach to Gulf bounty, which earned him five James Beard Best Chef: South semifinalist nominations, wondered what was next. When he opened Fairhope's Little Bird in 2025, hopes soared. Red snapper crudo swimming in local citrus and "Mom's sweet cornbread"—celebrating Alabama's farmers and fishermen and honoring his mom, Ginny—rise to meet the lofty expectations. [littlebirdfairhope.com](http://littlebirdfairhope.com)



## Bill Briand RECOMMENDS

### Breakfast PROVISION

I can walk over to fill up on great coffee and either the breakfast burrito packed with Conecuh sausage and avocado or a fried-egg-and-bacon croissant sandwich with chipotle aioli. [provisionfairhope.com](http://provisionfairhope.com)

### Lunch THE BARN AT HOPE FARM

The short-rib French dip sandwich is actually my favorite thing on the planet right now. But if you've got a lot to do, don't get it. With swiss and mornay sauce, it's rich and makes me want a nap. [thehopefarm.com/the-barn](http://thehopefarm.com/the-barn)

### Dinner MASTER JOE'S OR THE RAVENITE

The sushi at Master Joe's is outstanding, but the wings and pizzas at Ravenite are the best in town, so it depends what I'm in the mood for. [facebook.com/masterjoessushi](https://facebook.com/masterjoessushi); [facebook.com/TheRavenitePizzeria](https://facebook.com/TheRavenitePizzeria)

### Drinks BUCKY'S LOUNGE AT THE GRAND HOTEL

The cocktails are always on point, but sipping while watching the sunset over Mobile Bay takes them over the top. [@grandhotelresort](https://grandhotelresort)

C/O LITTLE BIRD: ANDREW THOMAS LEE



## BEST NEW RESTAURANT

### BAYONET *Birmingham*

The party at Birmingham's Bayonet, a MICHELIN Guide Bib Gourmand restaurant, starts with fresh product, including whole fish broken down in-house, continues with taquitos stuffed with sweet Royal Red shrimp and bright salsa verde, and culminates with golden-seared scallops atop corn-mushroom nage. Chef Rob McDaniel's ode to oysters—20 farmed varieties on offer daily and oyster-anchored martinis mixed tableside—amplifies the exuberant experience. [bayonetbham.com](http://bayonetbham.com)

**Most Worth-the-Drive Barbecue**  
**ALABAMA RIB SHACK**  
*Gainesville*

Patrons from near and far seek out Alabama Rib Shack in out-of-the-way Gainesville to tuck into pitmaster Jamie Lee Mitchell's palate-pleasing blend of West Indies influences and Southern comfort classics like slow-smoked pulled pork, cornbread, and candied yams cozied up to jerk chicken and oxtails. [facebook.com/alabamaribshack](https://facebook.com/alabamaribshack)

**Best Food Truck**  
**FUNKY FORTE**  
*Montgomery*

Chef Amber Bonds' fine-dining background ensures the casual, fun fare of her food truck (think loaded buffalo chicken fries and big, beefy flat-top-crisped burgers) is perfectly executed. And she pours her creative personality into weekend brunch: spiced chia pancakes with candied pecans (and sometimes bits of smoky bacon) and fried pork-chop sandwiches with pepper jack and mushroom gravy. [funkyforte.com](https://funkyforte.com)

**Best Ice Cream**  
**BIG SPOON CREAMERY**  
*Birmingham, Huntsville*

Everyone screams for the cool treats at Big Spoon Creamery. Its ice cream artisans churn milk and cream from a local, fourth-generation family-owned dairy, seasonal fruits, and other quality ingredients into flavors like Earl Grey, dark-chocolate-flecked raspberry, and almond-peach-cardamom. [bigspooncreamery.com](https://bigspooncreamery.com)

**Best Comeback Story**  
**ZACK'S FAMILY RESTAURANT**  
*Dothan*

In late 2024, when Benjamin Henderson rebuilt and reopened the eatery his aunt and uncle founded, the Wiregrass community cheered for the return of fried chicken, slow cooked turnips, and peach cobbler, all made from Henderson's grandmother's and aunt's recipes. [zacksfamilyrestaurant.com](https://zacksfamilyrestaurant.com)

**Best Culinary Hotel**  
**THE LAUREL HOTEL AND SPA**  
*Auburn*

The experiential learning at this teaching hotel delivers a win for Auburn University's hospitality management students. Its luxe rooms and rooftop cocktail and tapas bar scored Alabama its only AAA five-diamond property. But The Laurel's MICHELIN-recommended teaching restaurant, **1856—Culinary Residence**, is the touchdown, where students serve tahini-sauced butternut-squash gnocchi and melting wagyu short ribs. [laurelhotelandspa.com](https://laurelhotelandspa.com)



Funky Forte

tk



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: C/O THE LAUREL HOTEL; C/O BIG SPOON CREAMERY; MICHELLE CONSUEGRA, OPPOSITE SIDEBAR: C/O ADIÓS

Big Spoon Creamery



**BEST BEVERAGE PRO**  
**José Medina Camacho**  
**ADIÓS**  
*Birmingham*

At Adiós, José Medina Camacho relies on his Mexican heritage to move the menu beyond standard margaritas. His use of tequilas, mezcals, rums, and bourbons, as well as lesser-known Mexican spirits like agave-based raicilla, blends with an international ingredient roster encouraging patrons to wave goodbye to preconceived notions of Mexican cocktails and putting Camacho on 2025's James Beard finalist list for Outstanding Professional in Beverage Service. [adiosbham.com](https://adiosbham.com)

**José Medina Camacho's CURRENT FAVORITES**

- ❖ **ALABAMA PRODUCT**

I love to sub Booch Buddies ginger kombucha for ginger beer to add spice to our ginger margarita. [boochbuddies.com](https://boochbuddies.com)
- ❖ **BEVERAGE TREND**

While the Aperol spritz rules, I'm hoping to see some white port spritzes or something more out-of-the-box gain ground this year. And I'm looking forward to using Dolin's new strawberry vermouth in some spring and summer drinks.
- ❖ **DRINK SOMEWHERE ELSE**

In Birmingham, I enjoy the 50/50 martini with wings at Continental Drift. [continentaldriftbham.com](https://continentaldriftbham.com)



Adiós



Adiós



**Best Biscuit**  
**THE HUMMINGBIRD WAY**  
**OYSTER BAR**  
*Mobile*

Biscuits remain a constant on the oft-changing menu at The Hummingbird Way Oyster Bar. Owner-chef Jim Smith knows better than to deny diners his pillowy rounds embellished with condiments both familiar and unexpected—whipped butter, dark cane syrup, and smoked sea salt. [thehummingbirdway.com](http://thehummingbirdway.com)

FROM LEFT: C/O THE HUMMINGBIRD WAY; C/O TAMARIND ISLAND GRILLE



**Best Caribbean Food**  
**TAMARIND ISLAND GRILLE**  
*Huntsville*

Customers cruise in for chef Lauren Herbert's spicy jerk chicken, fish and rice with fried plantains, and collards in the style of callaloo, an earthy spinach stew from her home country, Guyana. Even mac and cheese gets her heritage-honoring twist with a blend of Caribbean spices she won't divulge (no matter how many times you ask). [tamarindhsv.com](http://tamarindhsv.com)

# mississippi

BY AMY CONRY DAVIS



**BEST CHEF**  
**Beth Broussard Rogers**  
 J. BROUSSARD'S  
 Columbus

Rogers grew up beside her chef father and now carries on the business he began. Her approach is purposeful, reflected in limited seatings and intentional time with her diners. Consistency, supporting local farmers, and the relentless pursuit of the freshest ingredients are key to her vision at J. Broussard's. Steadfast standouts like pecan pane catfish grace her menu alongside newly minted additions: Champagne-crusted grouper with spicy crab butter and pork schnitzel with sweet corn cream and chimichurri. [jbroussards.com](http://jbroussards.com)



J. Broussard's

## Beth Broussard Rogers RECOMMENDS

### Breakfast BAKED AT J. BROUSSARD'S

A fried pork chop on a cheddar and chive biscuit with Creole pepper jelly or breakfast pizzas are stellar when we have them. [@baked\\_at\\_jbroussards](https://twitter.com/baked_at_jbroussards)

### Lunch MUNSON AND BROTHERS TRADING POST

I do the build-your-own-pizza with chicken, jalapeños, and onion. Delicious! I can also scoop up some of Molly Munson's brownies on my way home any night. [@munsonandbrothers](https://twitter.com/munsonandbrothers)

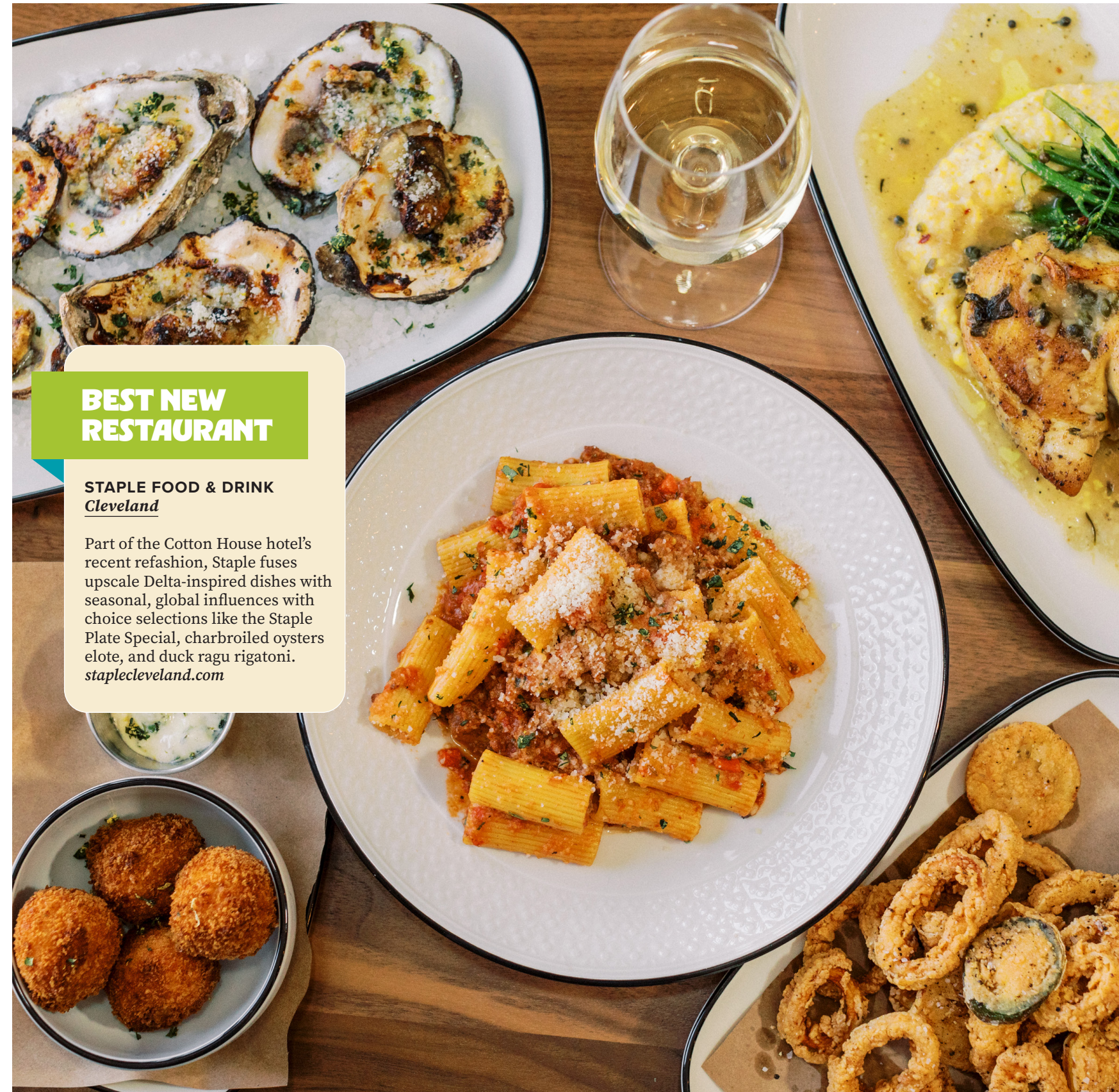
### Dinner PROFFITT'S PORCH

A sandwich out at Proffitt's Porch to enjoy the breeze on the deck. (662) 327-4485

### Drinks LA FAMILIA GROCERY & RESTAURANT

I love to grab an agua fresca when I stop by to shop. They usually have horchata and my favorite, the Jamaica. (813) 661-0210

C/O J. BROUSSARD'S. OPPOSITE: C/O STAPLE FOOD & DRINK



## BEST NEW RESTAURANT

### STAPLE FOOD & DRINK Cleveland

Part of the Cotton House hotel's recent refashion, Staple fuses upscale Delta-inspired dishes with seasonal, global influences with choice selections like the Staple Plate Special, charbroiled oysters elote, and duck ragu rigatoni. [stapleleveland.com](http://stapleleveland.com)

**Best Meat and Three**  
**PEARL'S DINER**  
*Laurel*

After 40 years away, longtime cook “Ms. Pearl” returned to her roots and opened this delightful blue-plate destination. Together with her family, inspired by her grandmother, she brings true home cooking and heart to this lively corner café. It’s lunch only, and often crowded, so get in line early for her famous fried chicken. [mspearlsdiner.com](http://mspearlsdiner.com)



The Boxcar

**Best Spot to Catch a Sunset**  
**THE BOXCAR**  
*Meridian*

Come for cocktails or a brick-oven pizza and stay for the views. Any stop in Meridian should include a toast to the golden hour on the 11th floor of the art-deco Threefoot Hotel. This cozy bar, with indoor and outdoor seating, serves shareable bites, Mississippi beer, and the catbird seat. [theboxcarmeridian.com](http://theboxcarmeridian.com)

**Most Outstanding Ingredients**  
**BIRDIE'S**  
*Hattiesburg*

BirdHouse Café, aka Birdie's, is chef Katie Dixon's whole-body philosophy made manifest. No pretense, just a steadfastly nutritious, mostly plant-based array of cold-pressed juices, bowls, salads, and wraps. Deciding is hard but fans swear by the Risi Pisi smoothie bowl named for Dixon's daughter. [birdhousecafe.net](http://birdhousecafe.net)



Brent's Drugs

**Best Take on Classic Diner Dishes**  
**BRENT'S DRUGS**  
*Jackson*

Step into the past at this former soda fountain/pharmacy. Eighty years later, Brent's still answers the call for uncomplicated American fare. Grab a booth or barstool and settle in for a nostalgic dining experience. The cherry Cokes and egg and olive sandwiches are early originals, but it's all satisfying comfort food. [brentsdrugs.com](http://brentsdrugs.com)



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: C/O THE BOXCAR; C/O BIRDIE'S CAFÉ; C/O BRENT'S DRUGS. OPPOSITE SIDEBAR: C/O JINSEI

Birdie's



**BEST BEVERAGE PRO**  
**Maddie Cate**  
**JINSEI**  
*Oxford*

A native Missourian, Maddie Cate came to Oxford for school but found a passion in bartending. Her recent win at Bit of the Sip's Iron Bartender 2025 came from a pineapple-infused Wonderbird Dry Gin, Strega, lemon juice, and housemade sage cold foam blend. She pours personality into every concoction, through playful names and unlikely flavor pairings. Case in point, the Siren's Call: muddled strawberries, peppercorn-infused Volcan Blanco tequila, Cocchi Rosa, basil syrup, and lemon juice topped with an egg white. [jinseioxford.com](http://jinseioxford.com)



Jinsei

**Maddie Cate's**  
**CURRENT FAVORITES**

- ❖ **MISSISSIPPI PRODUCT**  
 Wonderbird Gin! When creating a new cocktail list, gin is usually the first bottle I grab off the shelf, and now that Wonderbird has several different spirits it's so easy and fun to experiment with it. [wonderbirdspirits.com](http://wonderbirdspirits.com)
- ❖ **BEVERAGE TREND**  
 I think the spritz trend is fun right now. Although I tend to lean toward a negroni or a dirty martini myself, I do think once spring and summer hit it will be super fun to do some unique twists on a classic Aperol or Hugo spritz.
- ❖ **DRINK SOMEWHERE ELSE**  
 One of my favorite cocktails of all time is The Count, The Sage, The Temptress at Saint Leo. It's perfect in every way to me. [eatsaintleo.com](http://eatsaintleo.com)

**Best Culinary Hotel**  
**HOTEL VELA**  
*Gulfport*

Hotel Vela stands out with a winning trifecta of coastal vibes, sleek design, and meticulously crafted courses at **Siren Social Club**. From caviar to cocktails, “King of American Seafood” chef Austin Sumrall, his wife, Tresse, and a top-notch team bring next-level attention to detail to this MICHELIN-recommended restaurant. [thehotelvela.com](http://thehotelvela.com)

**Best Under-the-Radar**  
**ANTHONY'S GOOD FOOD MARKET**  
*West Point*

This 90-year-old local institution—once a grocery store, now a neighborhood haunt—is so entrenched in the community, every regular has a story to share about it. The current owners, Ray and Carrie Hamilton, keep the portions generous with Cajun-Creole entrees, pasta dishes, and steaks. No frills, just straightforward cuisine done right. [anthonysgoodfoodmarket.com](http://anthonysgoodfoodmarket.com)

**Most Decadent Desserts**  
**SUGAREE'S BAKERY**  
*New Albany*

Layer cakes, double doozie cookie sandwiches, Vardaman sweet potato pies—no sugar-filled stone has been left unturned here. Owner Mary Jennifer Russell has spent three decades fine-tuning family recipes into picture-perfect, finger-licking desserts. Made from scratch in the old-fashioned way, these sweet treats are a testament to Southern baking traditions. [sugarees.com](http://sugarees.com)

# florida

BY NIKKI MILLER-KA



**BEST CHEF**  
**Kayla Pfeiffer**  
BICYCLETTE COOKSHOP  
*Naples*

As Naples' first-ever James Beard Emerging Chef semifinalist (2025), Kayla Pfeiffer has transformed the city's dining landscape with her bold, ingredient-driven approach at Bicyclette Cookshop. Trained under Andrew Carmellini, she coaxes remarkable flavor from Florida's seasonal bounty—think hamachi collar with XO sauce or paddlefish caviar served with Bugles corn snacks. [bicyclettecookshop.com](http://bicyclettecookshop.com)



Bicyclette Cookshop

## Kayla Pfeiffer RECOMMENDS

### Breakfast BROOKLYN DOUGH

A well-made bacon, egg, and cheese is one of my favorite things. Brooklyn Dough sets the standard with fresh-baked bagels and exceptional hospitality. [brooklyndough.com](http://brooklyndough.com)

### Lunch NEAPOLITAN GOURMET

Old-school in the way I love—no fuss, just honest food made with care. The sandwiches are huge and can carry you for two days. My go-to is the tuna salad with lettuce, tomatoes, provolone, and hot peppers. [neapolitangourmet.com](http://neapolitangourmet.com)

### Dinner THE BOHEMIAN

A place I know will deliver. You can pop in for a snack or settle into a full dinner. Consistently good—the kind of meal that sets the tone for the night. [thebohemianbonita.com](http://thebohemianbonita.com)

### Drinks NAT NAT

My favorite of them all. Diego [Sanchez] and Ming [Yee] have it figured out—the food is exactly what I want, and the wine list shifts effortlessly. They create an experience you can't find anywhere else. [@natnatnaples](http://natnatnaples)

## BEST NEW RESTAURANT

### TIGRESS RESTAURANT & ROOFTOP BAR *Naples*

With standout dishes like dry-aged crown of duck with Hong Kong french toast and blue crab fried rice with jalapeño aioli, this modern Cantonese chophouse located on the seventh-floor rooftop of The Perry Hotel Naples features cuisine by celebrity chef Dale Talde and executive chef Iggy Ortiz. [@tigressrestaurantrooftopbar](http://@tigressrestaurantrooftopbar)

ANNA NGUYEN, OPPOSITE: CO TIGRESS RESTAURANT & ROOFTOP BAR





❖ **BEST BEVERAGE PRO**  
**Julio Cabrera**  
 CAFÉ LA TROVA  
 Miami

Julio Cabrera is widely regarded as the godfather of the modern Cuban cantinero movement. His bar program at Café La Trova has earned national recognition, including three consecutive appearances on the World's 50 Best Bars list (2021-2023). Named American Bartender of the Year in 2019 and inducted into the Bartender Hall of Fame in 2025, Cabrera is also a professor teaching the cantinero's legacy to future generations. [cafelatrova.com](http://cafelatrova.com)

**Julio Cabrera's CURRENT FAVORITES**

❖ **FLORIDA PRODUCT**

Guava marmalade by Jorge Zaldivar of PG Tropicals [which delivers authentic Cuban taste and consistent flavor for Cabrera's second-best-selling cocktail (right behind the mojito), El Guayabero]. [guavarico.com](http://guavarico.com)

❖ **BEVERAGE TREND**

Low-ABV cocktails reflect a global shift toward mindful drinking.

❖ **DRINK SOMEWHERE ELSE**

Negroni sbagliato at ViceVersa Miami [which serves them in oversized cups with large ice cubes—just like Bar Basso in Milan, where Cabrera spent Sundays during his four years living in Italy]. [viceversamia.com](http://viceversamia.com)



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ANTHONY NADER; C/O ULELE; R.C. VISUALS; MICHAEL PISARRI; OPPOSITE FROM TOP: C/O EPICUREAN HOTEL; C/O TIDE TABLES RESTAURANT & MARINA

**Best Culinary Hotel**  
**EPICUREAN HOTEL**  
 Tampa

From its rooftop bar to the in-house Epicurean Theatre, every corner of Epicurean Hotel is an ode to taste. Guests can take cooking classes, browse the artisan marketplace, and dine at **Élevation SoHo**, where French technique meets Florida ingredients with serious finesse. [epicureanhotel.com](http://epicureanhotel.com)



**Best Bold Flavors**  
**ULELE**  
 Tampa

Ulele is a celebration of native-inspired dishes and Florida ingredients, all cooked over an open flame in a historic Tampa Heights waterworks building. Chargrilled Gulf Coast oysters, alligator hushpuppies, Florida grouper, and house-brewed craft beer make it one of Tampa's defining restaurants. [ulele.com](http://ulele.com)

**Best Dock-to-Dish Dining**  
**TIDE TABLES RESTAURANT & MARINA**  
 Cortez

Grouper, redfish, crabs, and shrimp come straight off the docks from local fishers who know these waters best. Since 2014, husband-and-wife team Bobby and Gwen Woodson along with Star Fish Company owner Karen Bell have connected diners directly to A.P. Bell's wholesale operation and Cortez's historic working waterfront. [tidetablesrestaurant.com](http://tidetablesrestaurant.com)



**Best Sugar Rush**  
**SISTER HONEY'S**  
 Orlando

Owner Evette Rahman earned 2022 James Beard Outstanding Baker semifinalist honors and became the first three-time World Dessert Championship winner. Her old-fashioned homestyle cakes—crafted with professional technique and deft decorating—transform classic Southern flavors into showstopping confections. [sisterhoneys.com](http://sisterhoneys.com)

**Best Carb Pilgrimage**  
**ZAK THE BAKER**  
 Miami

Miami's sourdough king, Zak Stern, built a James Beard-nominated kosher bakery that's both a neighborhood staple and a national benchmark. From babka to rye, everything is meticulous, naturally leavened, and unmistakably Zak. This fiercely independent operation celebrates regional diversity while supplying wholesale accounts and walk-in devotees with bread that honors tradition. [zakthebaker.com](http://zakthebaker.com)



Nat Nat Wine Bar

**Best Pour Decisions**  
**NAT NAT WINE BAR**  
*Naples*

Diego Sanchez and Ming Yee, the duo behind this 30-seat wine bar, pair natural wines with a compact menu of comfort fare—think charcuterie, local catch, and proteins you’ll crave the next day. It’s the kind of intimate, knowledgeable spot that turns casual drinkers into collectors and evenings into education. [@natnatnaples](#)

**Best Date Night Investment**  
**IL LUSO**  
*Tallahassee*

Il Lusso offers fine dining without pretension. Dry-aged prime steaks are cut and seared with the same care and craft as handmade pastas like duck agnolotti and bucatini alla carbonara. An ambitious wine list spans Italian estates and California producers, proving that politics aren’t the only thing serious in the capital. [illussotally.com](#)



FROM LEFT: C/O NAT NAT WINE BAR; C/O IL LUSO

Il Lusso