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ABUNDANT ARTS AND EATS**

Raleigh, NC



▲ Top to bottom, left to right: Beasley's Chicken + Honey, The Raleigh Times Bar, Morgan Street Food Hall, Watts & Ward, Poole's Diner, Chuck's

RALEIGH'S RESTAURANT

Renaissance

Less than 500 miles from Columbus, this city in North Carolina's Research Triangle is in the midst of a culinary breakthrough.

BY TAMI KAMIN MEYER

For an introduction to Raleigh, North Carolina, look no further than Brewery Bhavana, a microcosm of the city's burgeoning culinary scene. The taproom features a mix of Belgian-style beers and Chinese dim sum, and—in an equally improbable pairing—a flower shop and a bookstore too. It has gained national recognition, and along with other nearby restaurants and bars, it has helped breathe new life into a section of downtown once begging for attention and investment.

This is the city and its cuisine; it's a story of cross-cultural exchange, of mixing old and new, of a region experiencing dramatic growth. Raleigh is the second-largest city in the Tar Heel State, and like Columbus, it's a state capital. According to *USA Today*, it's the ninth-fastest-growing city in the United States.

With all those mouths to feed, it's no wonder Raleigh is becoming a culinary hot spot—and the world is beginning to notice. In 2017, *Zagat* named Raleigh among the nation's most exciting food destinations, ahead of New York, Nashville and Miami.

Growth isn't just about numbers here. It's about the diverse food and drink places springing up across the city, a collection of timeless classics and ambitious new concepts. Whether you enjoy traditional Southern fare, modern Laotian cuisine or a taste of nearly every beer under the sun, Raleigh has something delicious to offer.

SOUTHERN STYLE AND COMFORT FOOD

In the same section of downtown Raleigh near Brewery Bhavana and the state Capitol building, chef Ashley Christensen found the site for her new restaurant in an unlikely location: an old Piggly Wiggly grocery store. According to Kaitlyn Goalen, the executive director of Christensen's AC Restaurants group, the space sat vacant for several years

before Christensen discovered it. The surrounding neighborhood had seen better days.

Christensen's goal was to "reactivate that part of downtown," says Goalen, so she took a chance and bought the property, opening **Beasley's Chicken + Honey** in 2011. That decision proved insightful, as the neighborhood continues to experience a resurgence of energy and growth. The restaurant's convenient location attracts a wide array of customers, including business people, conventioners, families and even those who seek Champagne with their fried chicken.

There is no doubt that the fried bird is the star of this joint. According to Goalen, Beasley's sold upwards of 49,000 fried chicken and waffle meals in 2018 alone. Its popular version of this Southern comfort food pays homage to Christensen's parents. The fried chicken honors her mother's Memphis roots, and since her father was a part-time beekeeper, her mom drizzled honey on her fried chicken to lend a sweet/salty contrast, says Goalen. That's why Christensen does it, too.

And it's not just chicken either. Christensen transformed the old Piggly Wiggly into three separate establishments: Beasley's, a burger and sandwich joint called Chuck's and the craft cocktail lounge Fox Liquor Bar. Along with two other downtown ventures—an original comfort food restaurant, Poole's Diner, and an upscale eatery, Death & Taxes—Christensen has built a mini Raleigh empire.

She's also received top honors for her Southern cooking, winning the James Beard Award for Best Chef in the Southeast in 2014 and finishing as a runner-up for the James Beard Outstanding Chef Award in 2018. It's proof that comfort food and haute cuisine can be one and the same.

Beasley's Chicken + Honey, 237 S. Wilmington St., ac-restaurants.com, 919-322-0127. No reservations.

MORE COMFORT FOOD:

Tupelo Honey
Southern-influenced comfort food.
425 Oberlin Rd.,
tupelohoneycafe.com,
919-723-9353

Big Ed's City Market Restaurant
Southern specialties and breakfast featuring fresh, local eggs.
220 Wolfe St.,
bigedscitymarket.com,
919-836-9909

The Smashed Waffle Co.
Fresh Belgian waffles with a variety of delectable toppings, signature Waffle-wiches and unique lattes.
2304 Hillsborough St., Ste. 100, smashedwaffles.com,
984-200-2200

The Pit Authentic Barbecue
Whole-hog, pit-cooked barbecue.
328 W. Davis St.,
thepit-raleigh.com,
919-890-4500



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Raleigh, NC

MORE TAVERNS AND DINERS:

Hibernian Irish Pub and Restaurant

Authentic Irish pubs,
owned by a native of
the Emerald Isle.
311 Glenwood Ave. and
8021 Falls of Neuse Rd.,
hibernianpub.com,
919-835-2258 (Glenwood)
and 919-803-0290 (Falls
of Neuse)

The Roast Grill

Serves only hot dogs,
glass-bottle Cokes and
homemade Greek des-
serts—don't ask for ketch-
up because the rule here is
that it doesn't belong on a
proper hot dog.
75 West St., roastgrill.com,
919-852-8292

The Remedy Diner

The feel of a traditional
diner and bar, but with an
emphasis on fresh ingredi-
ents and vegan options.
927 W. Morgan St.,
theremedydiner.com,
919-835-3553

OLD-SCHOOL TAVERNS AND DINERS

Taking a step inside *The Raleigh Times Bar*
is like taking a step back in time. That's
because it's housed in the building that was
once home to *The Raleigh Times*, the city's
defunct afternoon newspaper. The paper
was churned out at that location from 1906
to 1925, and many vestiges of the work
are incorporated in the restaurant's décor
and menu.

When owner Greg Hatem bought and
renovated the space in 2006, he was deter-
mined to retain the charm of the structure.
Aged newspaper clippings and images line
the walls, while a display case shows off re-
lics of the newsroom of yesteryear, including
old printing press letters, newspaper carrier
bags and even reporters' notebooks. Unsur-
prisingly, the bar attracts a certain crowd.
"We're known as a journalist's hangout,"
says Hatem.

The tavern and eatery changed from a
reporter's watering hole to a mainstream
destination on a fateful day in 2008. "That's
when we went from recording history to
making it," he says.

A U.S. senator named Barack Obama
stopped in while campaigning in Raleigh,
and back then he didn't have security with
him, says Hatem. Diners walked up to shake
his hand. Photos of the man who would
become president appeared in publications
across the country, including *The New York
Times*. That day helped put *The Raleigh
Times Bar* on the map, Hatem says.

For those looking to eat like a president, or
at least someone on the campaign trail, the
restaurant's most popular dish is its house-
ground burger. It also offers locally produced
cheeses and breads, while its salads feature
vegetables grown in local greenhouses.

In a place that has both written history
and made a bit of it, Raleigh's past is so
important to Hatem that he includes a class
about the city's history in staff training.

"My servers are so good at teaching peo-
ple about Raleigh, we get asked if we are
associated with the chamber of commerce,"
Hatem jokes.

The Raleigh Times Bar, 14 E. Hargett
St., raleightimesbar.com, 919-833-0999.
No reservations.



▲ Raleigh Beer Garden

BEER GARDENS, TAPROOMS AND COCKTAIL BARS

If someone visited the *Raleigh Beer Garden*
every day for a year, she could imbibe a dif-
ferent brew each time and still not tap every
keg offered inside this glorious haven of hops.

According to general manager Carlos Riv-
ers, Raleigh Beer Garden's extensive draft list
helped it earn two impressive worldwide dis-
tinctions: the most beer taps of any restaurant
in one location (402) and the largest number
of breweries represented in one venue.

The beer garden's offerings are ever-
changing, so don't expect something so sim-
ple as a draft list. "We don't have a printed
beer menu, because we change 30 to 40 per-
cent of our beers every 30 to 45 days," says
Rivers. Instead,
guests are in-
vited to download
Unappd, a free
app that lets users
track and share
beers they've tried
or want to try.
Raleigh Beer Garden's profile on
the app details the
day's offerings.

To eliminate
crowding, this tap-
room on steroids is
housed in a three-
level structure,
with each floor
featuring differ-
ent beers. All 144
taps on the first
floor offer North
Carolina beers.

Other domestics
and some interna-
tional brews are
the draw on the
second floor. The
top floor features a
rooftop bar with 12 beers. If you still need
more variety, check out the old Airstream
camper in the backyard, which was con-
verted into a bar that features 24 more taps.

In addition to its vast beer offerings,
the *Raleigh Beer Garden* features another
unusual characteristic: a three-story tree
in the center of the structure. According to
owner Niall Hanley, the pin oak was lum-
bered from the yard of a Raleigh resident
and reassembled inside the massive bar
and eatery. Most of the bar's counters and
furniture are live-edge creations handmade
using wood from trees that once grew on
the property.

MORE BARS AND LOUNGES:

Watts & Ward

A 6,000-square-foot
speakeasy located in a
basement that features
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cocktails and live jazz.
200 S. Blount St.,
wattsandward.com,
919-896-8016

Havana Deluxe

Cigar and whiskey bar.
427 Glenwood Ave.,
havanadeluxe.com,
919-831-0991

The Haymaker

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and plenty of bubbles.
555 Fayetteville St., Unit
305, thehaymakeraleigh.com



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Free Visitor's Guide | 1-800-Hocking | ExploreHockingHills.com

Raleigh, NC

The beer-lover's destination also serves bar favorites and Southern classics, from a smoked brisket platter and a cheese and charcuterie tray to brats and pulled pork sandwiches. Each April, the Raleigh Beer Garden hosts the revered Wing Fling, which pits local eateries in a wing cook-off for the crown.

Raleigh Beer Garden, 614 Glenwood Ave., theraleighbeergarden.com, 919-324-3415. No reservations accepted on Saturdays or on Friday and Sunday nights.

GLOBAL CUISINE

Though Brewery Bhavana is the shiny new gem for owners Vansana and Vanisa Nolintha, it's not their first foray into the Raleigh dining scene. Next door, the brother and sister opened Bida Manda Laotian Restaurant and Bar in 2012 to pay homage to their parents and their hometown of Luang Prabang, Laos. The name Bida Manda is a Sanskrit term for father and mother, according to the restaurant's website.

Laos cuisine includes a mixture of Thai, Vietnamese and Chinese influences, filtered through the lens of French culinary style because of colonial rule. Bida Manda's menu offers familiar items that have made their way into mainstream American dining, such as spring rolls, alongside traditional fare that may be a little less familiar, such as duck or beef larb (a meat salad with spicy lime, local herbs and fermented fish sauce) and thum mak houg (a green papaya salad with tomato, peanuts, spicy lime sauce and a choice of meat).

Peter Dawyot, who moved to Raleigh 10 years ago and manages a public relations and marketing firm, dines at Bida Manda frequently and says the food is incredible.



▲ A dish at Bida Manda

PHOTO COURTESY BIDA MANDA

His favorite dishes include the caramelized ginger pork ribs and the pho Lao—a pot of beef, broth, noodles, onions and five spice (popular in Lao food). He describes it as a tasty, warm soup ideal for a winter meal.

Dawyot also frequents Brewery Bhavana, which came about because of homebrewer Patrick Woodson's chance dinner with his parents at Bida Manda, according to the brewery's website. He and the Nolinthas struck up a rapport and eventually brought floral designer Deana Nguyen and bookstore manager Monica Jon into the fold to form the enormous taproom/restaurant/flower shop/bookstore.

The accolades came quickly. Brewery Bhavana was named to *Bon Appetit's* Hot 10 list of best new restaurants in 2017. The Nolinthas' two restaurants have helped contribute to the greater revitalization of the area, which will take another step forward in 2019 with the renovation of Moore Square across the street. The greenspace will include a stage for outdoor concerts, festivals, community gatherings and more.

Bida Manda, 222 S. Blount St., bidamanda.com, 919-829-9999; Brewery Bhavana, 218 S. Blount St., brewerybhavana.com, 919-829-9998. Reservations recommended.

Tami Kamin Meyer is a Columbus freelance writer who has enjoyed exploring Raleigh's food and drink scene in the past.

MORE GLOBAL CUISINE:

Mofu Shoppe
The pan-Asian brick-and-mortar from the owners of Pho Nominal Dumping Truck, which won season six of the Food Network's *The Great Food Truck Race*. 321 S. Blount St., mofushoppe.com, 919-303-8465

Awaze Cuisine
Named after a spicy paste made from garlic, wine and berbere. Awaze serves Ethiopian and Eritrean dishes. 904 NE Maynard Rd., Cary, awazecuisine.com, 919-377-2599

Morgan Street Food Hall
Nearly two dozen startup eateries and food retailers, with worldwide flavors that include Japanese (*The Broth*), Argentinian (*Masivo Empanadas*) and Lebanese (*Sassool*). 411 W. Morgan St., morganfoodhall.com, 919-854-2720

Kadhali the Indian Wok
Traditional Indian fare often served in a replica of the kadhali—a deep, copper, wok-style pot (hence the name). 6260 Glenwood Ave., Ste. 702, theindianwokpresskadhali.com, 919-785-2864

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