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A Culinary MECCA
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With the influences of the mountains on one side and the sandy coast on the other, it’s no wonder that North Carolina has developed a reputation as a culinary mecca, fuelled from all over the state to serve some of the country’s best flavors. But what is it about this great state that makes it the place to go for a delicious meal?

According to chefs of North Carolina's top chefs, the recipe happens with a combination of local flavors, incredible culinary techniques, and soulful cooking.

Cooking from the Heart

For Mark Register of Southern Smoke BBQ, the best kind of North Carolina cuisine happens when you cook from the heart.

"I always try to cook from a soulful place," Register says. "People come from all over the state to taste the flavors. I always try to always come from the heart."
This since they were little."

"Kids inspire because they bring wonder, love, and an unbridled spirit. North Carolina food culture embodies all three. It's not just about the food; it's about the people and the stories that are woven into the fabric of our state."

Chef and owner of Bistro Le Bonheur, Claire Taylor, describes her inspiration for the dish as being inspired by her love of local, seasonal ingredients. "I'm inspired by the beauty of the land and the people who work hard to bring us fresh, locally sourced food."

For the shrimp and grits, Claire begins by sautéing onions, garlic, and bell peppers in olive oil. She then adds the shrimp, which are deveined and seasoned. Once the shrimp are cooked, she Deglazes the pan with white wine, adding more liquid to the pan to create a sauce. She then adds the grits, which are simmered in chicken broth until they are soft and creamy.

Finally, she adds a dash of cayenne pepper and a sprinkle of chopped parsley to give it a bit of extra flavor. The dish is then served hot, garnished with a sprinkle of fresh parsley and a drizzle of olive oil. It's a simple yet delicious way to enjoy the bounty of the South.
"I'm not going to make or serve food that I wouldn't serve to my family," Thompson says. "I'm going to make good, nutrient-rich food with real ingredients." During the pandemic, she also often cooking classes to teach others in the community how to work with local ingredients and eat within the season.

The restaurant has increased during the pandemic, but the limits of the former place to promote and support savory dishes and local foods.

A Sense of Community

"The most important thing is the sense of community. Everyone's different, and it's not one size fits all," Ashley Gladstone says. "There are

CANYON KITCHEN STAYS TRUE TO ITS ROOTS

Canyon Kitchen, located in the cool slopes of the community in Cullowhee, brings farm-to-table flavors to its menu with ingredients from the restaurant's own garden as well as local producers, including Sortie Farm, Alivio Farm, and Carolina Farm. And while the food is fresh, the North Carolina menu is anchored by a variety of local and seasonal options, including harvest salads, soups, and sandwiches. Canyon Kitchen's mission is simple: support local farmers and create a sense of community.

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