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Local Neighborhoods
30 Insider Tips

BEST City Weekends



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CHARLESTON

Stately manors still gleam, but top chefs give the city a fresh polish.



Oleander blooms along the promenade of the Battery.

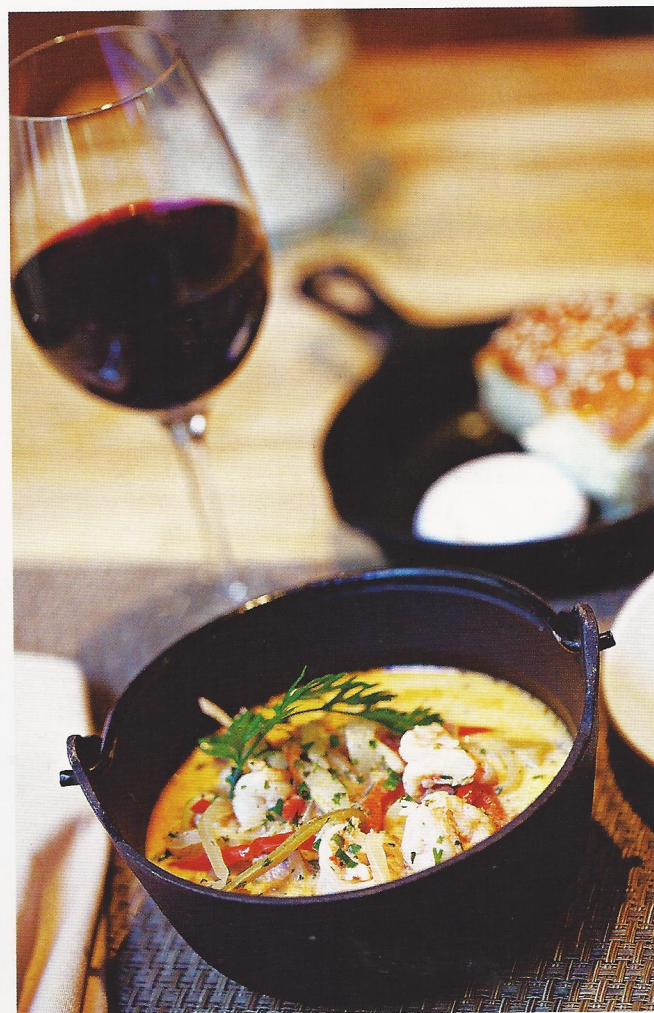
CRUISE THE BATTERY Get your bearings with a stroll along the Battery, the promenade that skirts the tip of the Charleston Peninsula between the Cooper and Ashley Rivers. Many of the antebellum mansions fronting the path were built by 18th-century plantation owners as summer retreats from the oppressive inland heat. The cannons in **White Point Gardens** pointing toward the water hark back to the Civil War, when the park was the city's last line of defense against attacks from Union strongholds across the harbor. From here, you can spot **Fort Sumter**, where the war began in 1861.

SHOP LOCAL Retail chains dominate King Street, the city's main shopping drag,

but indie gems including **Worthwhile**, a boutique that carries edgy women's wear labels such as CP Shades and Gary Graham, warrant a perusal. **Heirloom Book Company**, a paean to cookbooks vintage and hot off the press (and soon adding a garden shop), joined established clothing shops, art galleries, and antiques stores along lower King when it opened in 2011. To brush up on your Southern authors, head north to **Blue Bicycle Books**, owned by local scribe Jonathan Sanchez, to lose yourself in the narrow aisles. "People come to Charleston to slow down and reconnect," says Sanchez, "so seeing a book signed by Margaret Mitchell or an old copy of *To Kill a Mockingbird* really resonates with them."

VISIT THE SLAVE MUSEUM More than 40 enclosed slave sites were housed on the cobblestone streets of the French Quarter, east of King Street. Through recorded oral histories, letters, and artifacts, including shackles and ironwork forged by black artisans, the **Old Slave Mart Museum** chronicles the trade that helped make Charleston the richest city in the South.

SPOOK YOURSELF Graveyards are tucked throughout the Holy City, a nickname that partly refers to the scores of steeples that punctuate the skyline. Several prominent Charlestonians are buried in the stone crypts and below the crape myrtles in the cemeteries adjacent to the



Charleston is a foodie town with options ranging from bistro fare at 39 Rue de Jean (left) to traditional shrimp and grits at Husk (right).

JOHN KIRINICK (RESTAURANT), KATE THOMPSON (FOOD)

INSIDER TIP

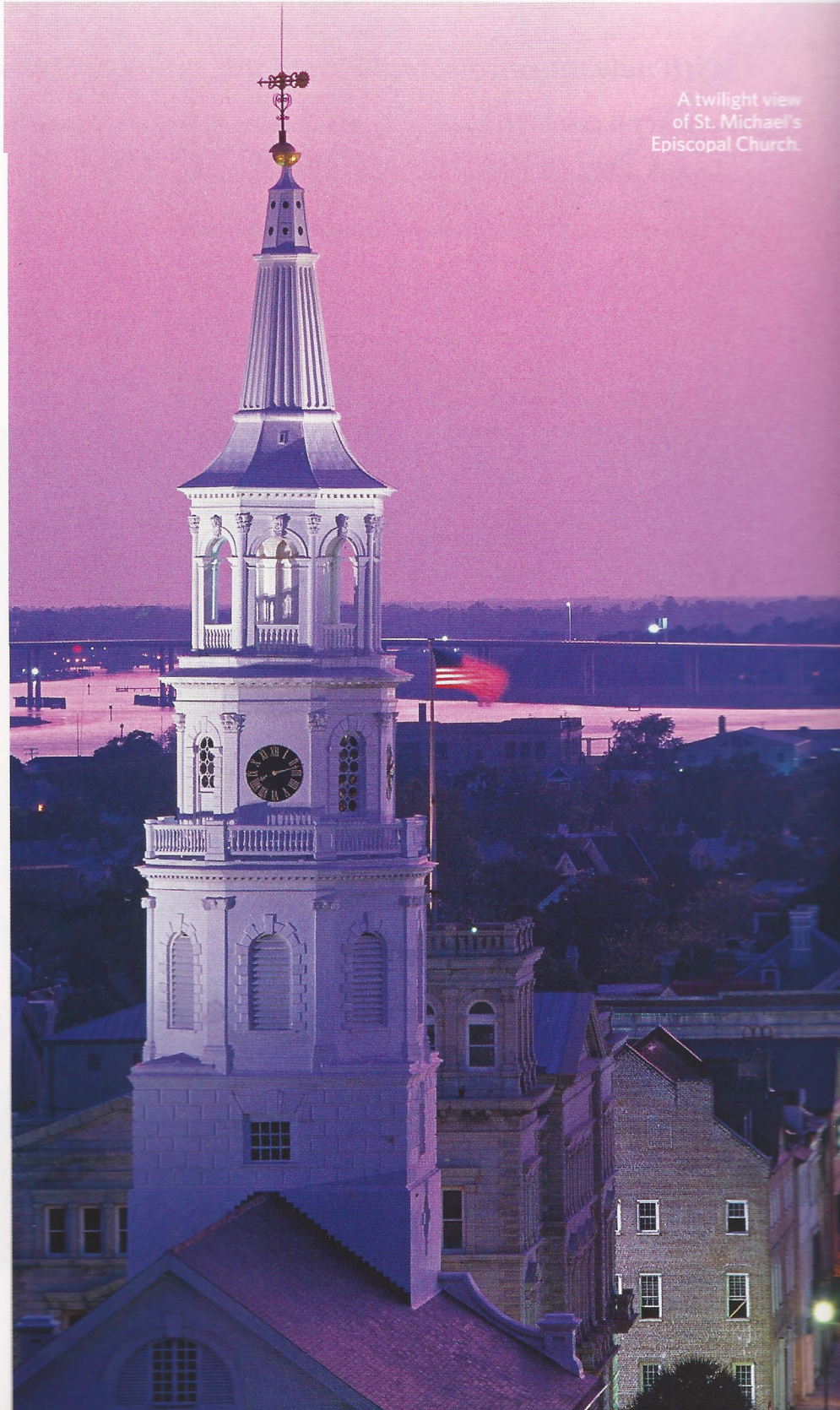
Explore the up-and-coming Cannonborough-Elliottborough neighborhood, where creative entrepreneurs are opening funky boutiques and stylish cafés.

17th-century **St. Philip's Church**. Among the notables, Governor Edward Rutledge, who at 26 was the youngest signer of the Declaration of Independence. A translucent figure believed to be the ghost of a woman named *Sue Howard Hardy* was reportedly captured here on film in 1987.

SOAK UP CULTURE The Beaux Arts **Gibbes Museum of Art** is devoted to Southern art, including works that depict the region's tumultuous history. Don't miss the ethereal watercolor landscapes by Alice Ravenel Huger Smith, part of a community of painters who used the low country's faded glory as inspiration.

CATCH SPOLETO Spoleto USA spans only a couple of weeks in the spring (May 23-June 8, 2014), but the festival has fostered a rich performing arts tradition for a city of around 120,000 people, thanks to a range of venues. The grande dame is the **Dock Street Theatre**, which caught the eye of Spoleto's Italian founder, Gian Carlo Menotti, when he was scouting for a stateside host back in 1977. Constructed in 1736, Dock Street was the first building in the United States purposely constructed as a theater. Upcoming performances by resident theater company Charleston Stage include *Annie* (December, 2013) and *Gershwin at Folly* (April, 2014).

SAMPLE THE SEAFOOD South Carolina shrimp are briny, sweet treats. Find them battered and crispy at the **Wreck of the Richard and Charlene** in Mount Pleasant or nestled in a bowl of grits with Surry sausage at Chef Sean Brock's much-lauded restaurant **Husk**. In winter, get your oyster fix at the **Ordinary**, local celebrity Chef Mike Lata's new seafood hall; eat them raw topped with a dollop of mignonette sauce or fried and tucked into Hawaiian rolls.



A twilight view of St. Michael's Episcopal Church.