



Charleston Dining: Something New, Something Old

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Even at their most avant-garde, Charleston's best restaurants are inseparable from the town's historic charms.

Charleston, South Carolina is practically a living history lesson, evidenced by rows of pastel-colored mansions and Charleston City Market – one of the oldest of its kind in the country. The city's Lowcountry cuisine also draws significant influences from French, English and African origin.

But of course for us the spotlight has turned to the food scene, two early standouts are [Husk](#) and [McCrary's](#) who helped put the city on the national culinary map. At both Husk and McCrary's, executive chef **Sean Brock** uses heirloom Southern crops he grows on his nearby farm, including the James Island Red Corn that goes into Husk's beloved shrimp and grits. At McCrary's, Brock nods to Southern cultural roots with dishes like beef tartare with hay-roasted beet, farro, and lichen, bringing back historic heirloom grains that hadn't been seen in decades. This kind of old-meets-new is simply the norm here—see for yourself on our tour of the town's culinary hot spots, below.

Charleston is literally surrounded by water—the town is perched scenically on a peninsula where two rivers meet the Atlantic. It's this location that furthers the region's nickname, The Lowcountry. For food hounds, all this water brings one thing to mind: seafood! The hottest new oyster-shucking mecca is [The Ordinary](#), opened last year by Mike Lata of farm-to-table favorite [FIG](#). At the restaurant's digs inside a former bank, plonk down beneath the soaring ceiling at the long wooden bar and you can opt for an icy seafood tower piled with locally-sourced raw bar favorites, or a shrimp burger on squid-ink brioche. Recently, Lata launched a changing daily special dubbed "the Ordinaries," a prix fixe special that includes salad and dessert. Tuesdays, it's a lobster roll and Thursdays, Caribbean fish stew.

There's hardly a notable restaurant in town that isn't housed in some kind of historic something-or-another, but

lately a mini-trend seems to be eateries inside former gas stations. One exciting disused petrol outpost is Home Team BBQ's original West Ashley location. The honky tonk-style joint has earned a rightful reputation for barbecue, including their famous smoked chicken wings and ribs. Equally known are its sauces—the restaurant has six of them, in flavors like Carolina Mustard and Alabama White.

Newcomer Rutledge Cab Company occupies another former gas station and has the roll-up doors to prove it. Their Southern-eclectic menu is loaded up on all-day breakfast (grits!) and a filling station charcuterie platter, featuring fried bologna with pepper jelly-mustard.

One new place, the Grocery, started life—as you might guess—as a market. Executive chef-owner Kevin Johnson works with local farmers and fisherman for his brunch and dinner menus. For further provisions, you'll find local favorite Caviar & Bananas inside the Charleston City Market. The café and shop was founded by Dean & DeLuca alums. Grab some edible souvenirs or pick up a sandwich or sweet treat to snack on.

If you want to hang with the staff, the Butcher & Bee, is a sandwich and snack joint hidden in a former industrial warehouse, beneath a highway overpass. Gritty setting aside, the place has many things going for it, including its BYOB status. Typical to the place, you'll probably find your waiter from lunch sipping his own cans of beer after hours (the place stays open till 3am) with a lamb pita or banh mi sandwich. Be sure to check out their daily-changing chalkboard menu on Facebook or Twitter.

And if all this running around means you haven't yet tried Charleston's signature dish, shrimp and grits, pop over to Hominy Grill, in a beautiful, historic former home downtown, where it's made with sautéed mushrooms and bacon. James Beard Award-winning chef-owner **Robert Stehling** also serves many other Lowcountry and Southern classics, like she crab soup, okra-and-shrimp beignets, and fried chicken. The food has all the appeal of Grandma's cooking—with a fresh spin. Much like the fresh yet historic feeling of Charleston itself.

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