

EXPERT PICKS:
COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA

CAPITAL CALLING

Columbia, South Carolina's sizzling culinary scene
By Alison Miller

A WAVE OF CHEFS returning to their hometown after successful careers afield are joining Columbia's broadening legion of homegrown culinary talent. The result? A quiet bubbling-over of brilliance in the kitchens and bars of this capital city college town.

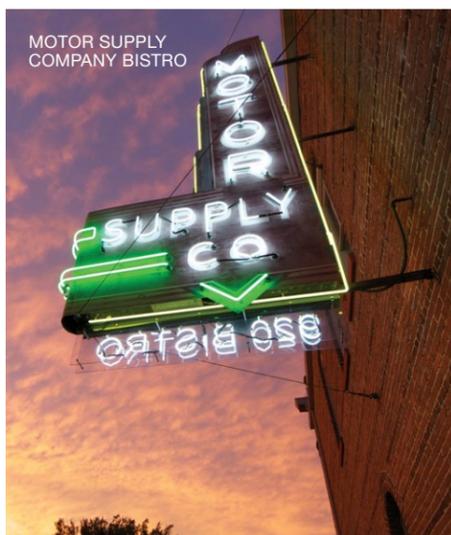
BOURBON

Housed in the 1869 Brennen Building, this cocktail den's high banquettes ensure conversations remain confidential, one more reason—in addition to the 250-strong whiskey list—for Statehouse workers to stick around. Bar Manager Kat Hunter, whose hobbies include unearthing antique cocktail books, is a doyenne of more than just brown water. Pair one of her bespoke cocktails with a snack from the Cajun-Creole menu.

bourboncolumbia.com

MOTOR SUPPLY COMPANY BISTRO

Nab a seat on the sun-strewn enclosed brick patio of this one-time auto parts store, and scan the handwritten menu for seafood and swine—Chef Wesley Fulmer has a deft hand



MOTOR SUPPLY COMPANY BISTRO



BOURBON

with fish and pork. Behind the bar, cocktail savant Josh Streetman makes most of his mixing ingredients, from raw almond orgeat to black walnut bitters, by hand.

motorsupplycobistro.com

CITY ROOTS FARM

At South Carolina's first urban farm, father-son growers Robbie and Eric McClam raise organic microgreens and vegetables for chefs and home cooks all over the South. Visitors can tour the farm and shop its store, but the best way to taste the flavors of City Roots and other area purveyors is at a harvest dinner—a monthly, five-course, wine-paired feast served in picking distance of the farm's sowed rows.

cityroots.org

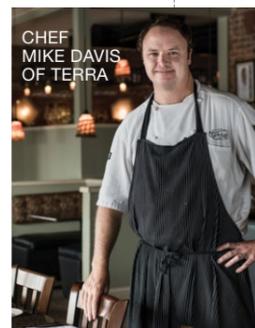
BAAN SAWAN

Chef Alex Suaudom du Monde's Thai standards, tinged with French, Southern, and even Jewish techniques (note the matzo ball tom kha soup), have turned forty-seat Baan Sawan into Columbia's unofficial off-duty chef hangout. Alex's brother, wine expert Sam Suaudom du Monde, describes lesser-known varieties by penning haikus.

baansawan.blogspot.com

TERRA

Chef Mike Davis, the godfather of chef-driven, locally-



CHEF MIKE DAVIS OF TERRA

sourced food in Columbia, turns out a seasonal menu, but locals insist his smoked lamb mac and duck confit Quack Madame stay on the menu year-round. The restaurant's hillside perch in West Columbia and its floor-to-ceiling windows afford guests a dazzling vista of the city. Take it in while tearing into Sous Chef Joby Wetzle's butcher's plate, a tour de force of handcrafted charcuterie.

terrasc.com

DRIP COFFEE

Go ahead, thumb through the boxes of vinyl lining the walls—the shop responsible for bringing pour-over coffee to town doubles as a record store. Order the soothingly spicy honey habanero latte and nod to the beat with the hipsterati of Five Points, the buzzing historic neighborhood this coffee joint calls home.

dripcolumbia.com

THE WAR MOUTH

As teenagers, owners Porter Barron Jr. and Rhett Elliott used to fish for warmouth in ponds around Camden, South Carolina. That's not the only thing these lifelong friends are nostalgic about—add to the list catfish stew (Elliott's grandfather's recipe), chicken bog, and whole-hog barbecue cooked in wood-fired pits out back. "It's the kind of food I missed when I was working at other restaurants," explains Rhett. "The kind of food I used to cook on my day off."

thewarmouth.com

RISE GOURMET GOODS & BAKESHOP

After launching two successful Southern restaurants in New York City, chef Sarah Simmons moved home to Columbia, teaming up with pastry chef Charley Scruggs to open this "Southern boulangerie" in 2015. Alton Brown promptly declared the bacon, egg, and cheese biscuit the best he's ever had. If you miss breakfast, opt for the A.R.G., an all-season BLT that marries applewood-smoked bacon, roasted tomato jam, lettuce, and lime pickle aioli betwixt two slices of Sally Lunn.

risebakeshop.com

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MEET THE LOCALS: TLP talked to two of them: Phil and Jessica Crouch, the founders of Crouch Distilling. Call it chemistry: a miller and a moonshiner's granddaughter fall in love and create a grain-to-glass whiskey distillery. On a visit to the tasting room—a stone's throw from University of South Carolina's Williams-Brice Stadium—the Crouches will walk you through the process, from crushing whole grains to distilling in 25-gallon pot stills.

How did you get into distilling?

Phil: I worked as a miller at Anson Mills here in Columbia, and I was a home brewer. Eventually Jessica bought me a five-gallon copper pot still we ran on our stove at home. When you understand fermentation you're ahead of the game.

Jessica: He had the passion before he had



RISE GOURMET GOODS & BAKESHOP

the job. For as long as I've known him, he's had an interest in agriculture and how things were done historically.

Describe the flavor of your bourbon.

Jessica: We use blue corn, malted rye, and malted barley, so it's sweet with butterscotch and toffee on the nose. We will

continue to make our flagship bourbon this way, but we recently started distilling with Jimmy Red corn, an heirloom variety that was nearly extinct until Greg Johnsman of Geechie Boy Mill on Edisto Island, South Carolina, repatriated it.

And you raise hogs too?

Jessica: We have a small herd of Ossabaw Island and Mulefoot hogs on the same land in Gaston, South Carolina, that my grandfather farmed. They eat our

mashed grain. Every couple months we process two hogs at an Animal Welfare Approved USDA facility and we sell the cuts and sausage out of a freezer in our tasting room. We call it whiskey-fed pork.

What other spirits do you produce?

Phil: From three grains—corn, malted barley, and malted rye—we make two recipes and age them differently to come up with five varieties of whiskey. Seasonally, we do peach brandy from South Carolina peaches, and fig brandy using figs from our own tree. We're also finishing some of our bourbon in fig brandy barrels, and we just released our first rhum agricole, made with sugar cane from a farm in St. George, South Carolina.

Where do you go to have a cocktail?

Jessica: The most creative cocktails in Columbia are being done at Motor Supply Company Bistro. Josh Streetman almost always has a seasonal mule on the menu with one of our spirits and his homemade ginger beer.



PHIL AND JESSICA CROUCH

PHOTO FAR LEFT BY NANCY DOWD