

LOUISIANA LIFE

travel

18 REMARKABLE

RESTAURANTS

WORTH THE TRIP

Truffle-fried oysters
with shaved Parmesan
cheese from Beausoleil
in Baton Rouge

NORTH

BARBECUE, WINES & MORE

Shreveport-Bossier's expanding culinary landscape

BY CHRIS JAY

At **Wine Country Bistro and Bottle Shop** in Shreveport, prodigal chef Anthony Felan has returned from a year-long stint cooking in California, reassuming his previous role at Wine Country and bringing his passion for local sourcing along with him. Simple dishes like a roasted beet and goat cheese salad, made using cheese from Haute Goat Creamery in nearby Longview, Texas, reveal Felan's penchant for allowing quality ingredients to speak for themselves. Low-country shrimp and grits, incorporating pecan-smoked andouille sausage from nearby Bergeron's Boudin and Cajun Meats, are a nod to restaurant owner Jason Brady's days as a chef in Charleston.

Real BBQ & More is a simple roadside barbecue stand in south-

Seared Ahi tuna with a chilled asparagus salad prepared by Chef Anthony Felan of Wine Country Bistro and Bottle Shop in Shreveport



western Shreveport where pitmaster Harvey Clay is smoking the kind of brisket that would impress the 'cue connoisseurs in his Central Texas hometown of Midland. Smoked for 14 hours over a mixture of oak, hickory and pecan woods, Clay's fatty brisket emerges with a perfect pink smoke ring and a peppery outer bark. The meat itself is so tender that it melts on the tongue. Clay, a pitmaster

for 40 years, stands nearly 7 feet tall and possesses a booming laugh that frequently echoes through the dining room.

"You can't judge a book by its cover" would be a great piece of advice to give any diner en route to **Lucky Palace**, a gourmet Chinese restaurant located inside of a hotel lobby in Bossier City. Menu highlights are the duck and scallion pancakes – the savory

MORE INFO

Wine Country Bistro and Bottle Shop
Pierremont Mall Shopping Center
4801 Line Ave # 12
Shreveport
(318) 629-9463
cadrehg.com/wine-country

Real BBQ and More
7828 Line Ave.
Shreveport
(318) 670-3730

Lucky Palace
750 Isle of Capri Blvd.,
Bossier City
(318) 752-1888
lucky-palace.com

roasted duck and Hoisin sauce offset nicely by the clear, mild flavor of the scallion pancakes – as well an old-school treatment of filet mignon called shaking beef. Explore the eye-popping wine list; this may be the world's only restaurant that serves a \$7 sesame chicken lunch special as well as a \$760 bottle of 2002 Harlan Estate Cabernet Sauvignon.

PHOTO COURTESY WINE COUNTRY BISTRO AND BOTTLE SHOP

CENTRAL

EXPLORING THE ECLECTIC

Fine dining, local favorites and a classic pie spot.

BY CHERÉ COEN

Downtown Alexandria has witnessed a resurgence of late with new restaurants and shops opening and the renovated Bentley Hotel comes back online at the end of this year. No visit to Alexandria would be complete without enjoying fine dining at **Diamond Grill** on Third Street, located in the former C. A. Schnack's Jewelry

Store dating back to the 1800s. Visitors may enjoy elegant Creole cuisine beneath 22-foot ceilings and chandeliers while listening to piano accompaniment or traverse the expansive staircase to the second floor lounge for house-created cocktails.

Head north to the small town of Boyce to experience fine dining

and a premium cocktail and wine bar at the newly opened **Janohn's Restaurant** located in a restored cotton gin on Highway 1. The off-the-beaten-track restaurant is helmed by chef Aaron Atchison, a graduate of Le Cordon Bleu in Austin. It's a small place, only 12 tables, so be sure to make reservations.

Heading south from Alexandria are two restaurants that locals rave about, each one unique in its own right. At Forest Hill, Mexican native Irma Rodriguez serves up authentic Mexican cuisine, including her award-winning tamales, at **Mi Tierra Cocina**. The restaurant's walls are covered in recent press the restaurant has garnered, not to mention Rodriguez's 1997 participation in the Festival of American Folklife at the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., and the three trophies she took home from the Delta Hot Tamale Festival in Greenville, Mississippi.

Truffle cheese canapé with fresh thyme, jumbo lump crabmeat and berre blanc from Janohn's balsamic reduction.



PHOTO COURTESY JANOHN'S

MORE INFO

Diamond Grill
924 3rd St.
Alexandria
(318) 448-8989
thediamondgrill.com

Janohn's Restaurant
410 Pacific Ave.
Boyce
(318) 793-5080
janohns.com

Mi Tierra Cocina
11418 US-165
Forest Hill
(318) 748-7699

Lea's Lunchroom
1810 US-71
Lecompte
(318) 776-5178
leaslunchroom.com

Over to the east of Forest Hill in Lecompte, **Lea's Lunchroom** continues to serve up its famous plate lunch specials and delectable pies. The restaurant began in 1928, the brainchild of Lea Johnson who used his family recipes to create the diner once spotlighted on *Late Night with Johnny Carson*. Visit to sample the ham plate lunches but don't leave without a slice of pie, so wonderful the Louisiana Legislature proclaimed Lecompte the "Pie Capital of Louisiana."

CAJUN

INNOVATIVE ACADIANA

Fried seafood, craft cocktails and good company

BY CHERÉ COEN

On any given night, **Social Southern Table & Bar** in Lafayette hums. The “chef-driven bar” serves two purposes – signature cocktails, craft beers and wine along with a menu of innovative dishes.

Social Southern not only serves as a combination of bar and restaurant, but offers special events as well. There’s the Lessons in Libations, where participants create cocktails and nibble on appetizers, and the Chicks Love Beer Dinner, which pairs up a beer flight with a special menu by chef Marc Krampe, among many others.

Social Southern’s one of several restaurants in Acadiana serving up wonderful food, veering from the ordinary and creating a fun culinary environment that’s also inductive to gathering for drinks.

Socialized shrimp brochettes (Rêve coffee-cured pork belly, smoke-fried shrimp, kimchi remoulade and Mary’s onion sprouts) from Social Southern



Over in Houma, **Cristiano Ristorante** blends Italian cuisine with Louisiana seafood – found conveniently “down the bayou” – in an elegant setting filled with fine art and antiques, one of the reasons the restaurant includes an art gallery. The sprawling former house also offers a lounge that’s perfect for drinks and company, complete with comfortable sofas and chairs. And when the weather’s cooperating, the expansive patio makes an ideal spot for both.

You’ll find **Café JoJo’s** in the oldest section of Morgan City, in a renovated storefront on Front Street by the river. Café JoJo’s serves

traditional Louisiana cuisine featuring seafood brought in fresh from the neighboring wetlands and Gulf of Mexico and other delectable dishes. In addition, the elegant bar serves up signature cocktails.

In the heart of Lake Charles, the **121 Artisan Bistro** provides a comfortable gathering place, providing Italian cuisine with a Mediterranean style but also some Southern favorites such as fried catfish with bruleed corn bread and braised collard and mustard greens. The bistro setting also makes an ideal spot for cocktails or wine with friends.

Great food and company – that’s what makes Acadiana so inviting.

MORE INFO

Social Southern Table & Bar
3901 Johnston St.
Lafayette
(337) 456-3274
socialsouthern.com

Cristiano Ristorante
724 High St.
Houma
(985) 223-1130
cristianoristorante.com

Café JoJo’s
624 Front St.
Morgan City
(985) 384-9291

121 Artisan Bistro
121 Dr. Michael Debaque Drive
Lake Charles
facebook.com/121artisanbistro

PHOTO BY DENNY CULBERT

PLANTATION

TREKKING TO TIGERLAND

4 Baton Rouge hotspots

BY TERESA DAY

Baton Rouge has experienced a boost in its culinary culture thanks to a growing trend of locally trained chefs staying in town to build their careers and relationships with nearby producers. This trend along with fierce local support of family run restaurants make it easy for visitors to feel right at home dining in the city’s neighborhood establishments.

Open since 1989, **Mansurs** is a long-time player in local, upscale dining in Baton Rouge. Dine on their classically Creole and South Louisiana fare while listening to a live jazz pianist. Start with charbroiled oysters, shucked right in front of you at the bar, then relish a cup of luscious cream of brie and crabmeat soup, followed by cedar-roasted redfish, plank-roasted and served with seasoned Creole lemon caper butter.

Set with the good silver, enjoy Cajun- and Creole-inspired dishes with a new twist on the norm at your table. **Beausoleil** strives to feature locally sourced ingredients from its cocktails to its

Louisiana shrimp and grits with andouille gravy from Beausoleil

PHOTO BY TERESA DAY

curried chicken salad. Try a Mississippi Mule and truffled fried oysters with shaved Parmesan cheese to start, followed by Louisiana shrimp and grits with andouille gravy and rich, velvety chocolate pot de crème to finish.

Nestled in the city’s Perkins Road Overpass hotbed of neighborhood eateries is **City Pork Deli and Charcuterie**. Try the

Cubano or chef’s daily special, sip some wine with one of their expertly selected charcuterie plates or go whole hog at their monthly Cochon Du Lait. Sister location, City Pork Brasserie and Bar, also boasts a trendsetting menu made by a locally named “chef to watch.” Drink craft beer at the bar and savor a board of cheek pastrami sandwiches or

the rabbit and dumplings with pork gyoza and crispy cabbage slaw.

Owned by a former LSU lineman and run by a James Beard visiting chef, **Ruffino’s** Italian-Creole fusion menu spans from the traditional to the unexpected. Try the crabmeat cheesecake to start, then mull over the very important choice of veal Michael (pan-sautéed medallions, crabmeat, capellini and vodka tomato cream) or the prime ribeye cap with one of their tantalizing toppings like crabmeat imperial.



MORE INFO

Mansurs
5720 Corporate Blvd.,
Baton Rouge
(225) 923-3366
mansursontheboulevard.com

Beausoleil
7731 Jefferson Hwy.
Baton Rouge
(225) 926-1172
beausoleilrestaurantandbar.com

City Pork Deli and Charcuterie
2363 Hollydale Ave.
Baton Rouge
(225) 300-4550
cityporkdeli.com

Ruffino’s
18811 Highland Road
Baton Rouge
(225) 753-3458
ruffinosrestaurant.com

INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCES

Argentine, Israeli and Chinese restaurants bring fresh flavors to the Crescent City

BY BERNARD FRUGÉ III

When people envision New Orleans dining, they think of the synthesis of French and Creole cuisines that has developed over hundreds of years and with which the city is commonly associated. But in recent years, New Orleans has become a hotbed of international cuisine, as more enterprising restaurateurs are flooding the Crescent City culinary scene.

Located in the heart of the Warehouse District since opening in 2006, **La Boca** has been around far longer than the other restaurants featured in this article. La Boca is an Argentine steakhouse that uses the highest quality meat in both domestic and South American preparations. Diners in the mood for a classic can go for a 20-ounce certified angus T-bone, while those seeking a taste of Patagonia should try the hanger steak or skirt steak slow cooked in its skin. It is highly recommended that visitors explore these interesting dishes that might lie outside of the comfort zones of American carnivores. The La Boca experience is truly an exploration of the world of beef.

Red's opened in the Bywater neighborhood in 2014 and downtown New Orleans has been going nuts over the innovative,



"For the Table" appetizers: baba ganoush, tabouleh, pickled vegetables, heirloom Carrots, roasted beets, ikra, labneh, lutenitsa and Israeli salad from Shaya

nontraditional flavors pouring out of the kitchen. One of the co-founders, Tobias Womack, formerly cooked in the York outpost of San Francisco's much-vaunted Mission Chinese, and his daring flavor combinations are reflective of his impressive résumé. For instance, the "kung pao pastrami"

is a dish that directly harkens back to the menu of Mission Chinese. But the dish that truly shines, aside from the pastrami and delicious ribs, is "General Lee's chicken," a delectable deep-fried chicken smothered in hoisin barbecue sauce and crushed peanuts. In a city with many stellar fried chicken offerings, this is possibly the best.

Shaya, which opened its doors early this year, is the newest restaurant on this list. Shaya boasts

MORE INFO

La Boca

870 Tchoupitoulas St.
New Orleans
(504) 525-8205
labocasteaks.com

Red's Chinese

3048 St. Claude Ave.
New Orleans
(504) 304-6030
redschinese.com

Shaya

4213 Magazine St.
New Orleans
(504) 891-4213
shayarrestaurant.com

a beautiful modern Israeli menu, the country of origin of the eponymous chef and founder, Alon Shaya. The newly renovated space on Magazine Street is beautiful, tastefully minimalist and contemporary without feeling cold or impersonal. Much of the menu, with a large emphasis on shared plates, contains offerings that are intended to be enjoyed with pita from the futuristic-looking pita oven constructed solely for that purpose. This includes various items from the center of the menu, from which diners can choose three or five small plates for sharing, and also the selection of four different mind-blowing preparations of hummus. Shaya has instantly become one of the best casual dining options in New Orleans.