

THE NOTORIOUS B & G

Follow our quest for the state's best biscuits and gravy.



The Corner Restaurant in Kansas City is known for its biscuits and gravy. The meatiness of the gravy makes it special. Try the gravy on the amazing chicken and biscuit sandwich, too.

The Gravy States

Biscuits and gravy traces its origins back to the early days of America. The dish became especially popular after the Revolutionary War when Southerners, looking for a cheap way to fill their bellies, began making it before long days of farm work. Today, biscuit and gravy connoisseurs are more likely to take a nap after eating the hearty Southern delicacy.

Although biscuits and gravy is a staple at any diner or home-style breakfast joint, it's also making its way onto menus at more sophisticated breakfast and brunch spots. Chefs are experimenting with

this old standby now more than ever—trying out new ingredients and pushing the limits of what can be deemed B&G.

Considered the northern-most Southern state, Missouri is a particularly good place for biscuits and gravy. As rural and metropolitan cultures collide, you can find innovative and home-style variations of the dish in equal parts within our borders. In that spirit, we uncovered some of our state's best. These restaurants are some of our favorites, but we're only scratching the surface.

COURTESY OF THE CORNER RESTAURANT

Kansas City

THE CORNER RESTAURANT

The Corner Restaurant is a Kansas City institution. When Steve Friedman opened the diner on the corner of Westport Road and Broadway on Valentine's Day 1980, he had no idea that the restaurant would be a hot topic among gourmet connoisseurs and food writers thirty-five years later.

Back when Reagan was king, the Corner Restaurant was a diner in every sense of the word. It was cheap. It offered everything. And it was a hit. In the center of Kansas City's counterculture district of Westport, people would wait in lines that ran around the block to dine in a hip environment that served top-of-the-line breakfast faire, including some of the best biscuits and gravy around. However, in its twilight years the restaurant changed ownership and declined in quality. In 2010, the Corner Restaurant closed its doors.

Shortly after the restaurant closed, Dawn Slaughter moved to Kansas City. She was originally from Springfield, so she didn't know the Corner Restaurant's legendary status. However, her then business partner, Michael Pfeifer, was a Kansas City native who grew up on the food there. After some careful consideration and six months of remodeling, Michael and Dawn reopened the restaurant in April 2013.

The Corner Restaurant is no longer the place to come for a \$2.99 breakfast, but it might be all the better for it. The restaurant is clean, the ingredients are better, and it's a great spot for brunch seven days a week.

"Our stance was to bring in a more modern approach: make everything from scratch and try to use as much local ingredients as we can," says Dawn Slaughter, now the restaurant's sole owner.

Using as many local ingredients as possible is one reason for the higher menu prices, but it's worth it. All the eggs come from La Ferme du Bonheur farm in Higginsville. The bread is from Farm to Market Bread Company in Kansas City. Coffee is from the Roasterie in Kansas City. And a variety of other ingredients come from Missouri farms, including the delicious

COURTESY OF THE CORNER RESTAURANT



Outdoor seating has always been part of the appeal of the Corner Restaurant. However, the newest incarnation, circa 2013, is slightly more upscale than the previous restaurant.

jellies and jams from Good Natured Family Farms—a cooperative of more than 150 farms in the Kansas City area.

Along with high quality ingredients, the menu has a few items that may have been a bit high-minded for the Corner Restaurant's previous incarnation: grapefruit brûlée, gourmet salads, and more. However, much of Steve Friedman's spirit is still alive.

"We kept a few things that were signature to the Corner," Dawn says. "Like, instead of omelettes, we do Scramble-fuls because that's what they did."

The restaurant even has a plaque dedicated to the original owner out front. However, the restaurant is both honoring the old Corner and outpacing it in one way: its Swoonin' Biscuits and Gravy.

Chef Stephanie Dumler seasons pork sausage with a signature spice blend, which includes sage, before preparing it for the gravy. The fluffy biscuits are made fresh every day. And everything about the biscuits and the gravy is nearly perfect. However, the best part is the meatiness of the gravy. Every bite is packed with delicious, spicy, savory sausage.

"I was raised in Southwest Missouri, so

I know you have to do a good biscuits and gravy," Dawn says. "For a breakfast-brunch place, that's the focus. You can't do gravy with no meat, or it's just not worth putting it on the menu."—Jonas Weir

thecornerkc.com • 4059 Broadway • 816-931-4401

Springfield

GAILEY'S BREAKFAST CAFÉ

Gailey's in Downtown Springfield does not fill prescriptions any more, unless your doctor wrote you a prescription for a big, hearty breakfast.

More than seventy years ago, Joe and Beulah Gailey opened Gailey's Drugstore. The pharmacy also had a lunch counter, where workers on break could come grab a hamburger and a soda. Eventually, though, Beulah had to sell the store, and in 2005, Gailey's reopened as a breakfast restaurant that specialized in solid diner staples, heaping portions, and excellent quality.

Today, Gailey's is marked from the outside with a sign, seemingly from a bygone era, hanging from a four-story brick building. A

Café Berlin in Columbia serves breakfast faire with a bohemian flair. This restaurant gained local media attention in 2009 when it moved locations and transported everything in the restaurant by bicycles. About thirty cyclists helped out.



Gailey's Breakfast Cafe in Springfield is located in a historic pharmacy. This restaurant has become known for its Sweet Browns—sweet potato hash browns with brown sugar.

sign on the side reads “prescriptions” and is bookended by Coca-Cola logos. Inside, Gailey’s maintains a similarly classic look with nods to the drugstore that it once was. You could imagine 1950s factory workers congregating at the lunch counter during break or Joe Gailey hanging up the Hiland ice cream sign some sixty years ago.

The food is akin to the décor; it’s classic. All the diner favorites you could ask for are on the menu. The Big Boy offers pancakes and eggs with your choice of bacon or sausage. The Steak and Eggs plate is what kings would have for breakfast. The Downtowner offers a sampling of just about everything. However, the must-order plate at Gailey’s is the Bear Hug: two eggs, your choice of sausage or bacon,

hash browns, and a huge portion of the restaurant’s spectacular biscuits and gravy.

Gailey’s has biscuits that could sink a horse, and the secret recipe gravy is the apex of traditional country gravy. It’s not too spicy, the cooks don’t overdo it on the flour, and the sausage ratio is perfect. It’s the archetypal Southern breakfast food, and there’s nothing too fancy or innovative about it. However, Gailey’s does serve up some culinary adventurousness.

Instead of hash browns, you can order Sweet Browns: shredded sweet potatoes with a touch of brown sugar. The scrambled eggs on The Executive plate are mixed with Asiago cheese and cilantro. The Full Monty English breakfast is served with baked beans and grilled tomatoes. But what keeps customers coming

COURTESY OF MISSOURI DIVISION OF TOURISM; HARRY KATZ

back is overall quality and one of the friendliest restaurant staffs in the state, not to mention some of the best biscuits and gravy this side of the Mississippi.—*Jonas Weir*
Facebook: Gailey’s Breakfast Café • 220 E. Walnut Street • 417-866-5500

Columbia
CAFÉ BERLIN

Café Berlin does not serve German food, though the staff gets asked all of the time. With a mix of Southern comfort food and traditional diner classics, Café Berlin’s menu can only be considered Missouri cuisine.

“If you read the menu and see the first few items—the Yankee, the Rebel, the Union—you’ll see we’re playing off our proximity to the Mason Dixon Line,” says kitchen manager Pat Connor. “It’s definitely got that Missouri flair.”

Part of why Café Berlin has such a distinctive Show-Me State flavor is because the restaurant buys as many as ingredients as it can locally. The free-range eggs are from Stanton Brothers near Centralia. The sausage and bacon come from Patchwork Family Farms in Columbia. The coffee is roasted at Lakota Coffee in Columbia. And it uses as much local produce as possible.

“It’s cool to meet the people who prepare our meat or grow our crops,” Pat says. “That’s more fulfilling at the end of the day: knowing that not only are you making good food, but you’re also supporting a local economy.”

Supporting a local economy gives Café Berlin a sense of place, but its quiriness cannot be understated. The menu items either have offbeat names—Anonymous Tacos, the Awesome Burger, the Compost Pile—or were named after employees or customers, like the Schyler sandwich or the Carey Burrito. For some reason, the restaurant is home to over two dozen copies of Jurassic Park on VHS. And the coffee cups are all mismatched mugs from local thrift shops.

COURTESY OF LOGUE’S RESTAURANT



After twenty-nine years in business, Logue’s Restaurant has become an institution. Logue’s serves breakfast all day, so you can get your biscuits-and-gravy fix at any time between 6 AM and 9 PM, Monday through Saturday.

“It’s gotten to the point where people bring in coffee mugs for us,” Pat says. “This lady last weekend brought in like twenty coffee mugs.”

In addition to the quiriness, Café Berlin has many ties to the arts community in Columbia. The restaurant serves as a music venue for the True/False Film Fest. Plus, the newly built bar and stage serves as a year-round venue for local music and independent touring artists. The interior is aesthetically pleasing. And the staff is a regular motley crew of local artists.

“Everyone we employ has huge artistic passions outside of work, and that just speaks volumes about what Café Berlin is and what we’ve always strived to be,” Pat says. “Everything at the cafe was built and touched by an employee at some point.”

Both the menu and the logo were designed by employees. The new renovation, which features a beautiful, handcrafted wooden bar, was done by a line cook who does carpentry work. The T-shirts were designed by a former employee whose passion is creating comic books. And oddly enough, the most ordered item at the restaurant is The Starving Artist.

An egg, sautéed greens, and the restaurant’s signature vegetarian biscuits and gravy make up this simple and flavorful dish. The vegetarian gravy is truly what makes the dish,

though. With whole chipotle peppers, simmered red onions, butter, milk, and flour, this gravy stands out as one of the most unique twists on the Southern staple. And it’s so good, even meat lovers will come back for seconds.

On the other hand, Berlin’s sausage gravy could be even better. Made with loads of pork sausage and a special spice blend that includes sage, this gravy is hauntingly good. The trick is using bacon grease as a base. So, if Café Berlin has only one message for aspiring chefs, it’s to save your bacon grease.—*Jonas Weir*

cafeberlin.com • 220 N. 10th Street • 573-441-0400

Hannibal
LOGUE’S RESTAURANT

Logue’s Restaurant in Hannibal is about a year away from its thirtieth anniversary, according to Darin Logue, whose father, Larry, owns the family restaurant. In the food industry, thirty years is a pretty respectable run, but it’s even more impressive when you take into account that Larry Logue has owned and operated the place since the day it opened. He and his wife, Eoke, run the show, and Darin helps them out with social media and their website.

“Dad owned other restaurants before this, too,” Darin says. “He still does everything with a paper ledger and a number two pencil.”

With that much experience driving both front- and back-of-house, it’s not surprising that Logue’s has good biscuits and gravy. You won’t see anything too fancy on the menu at Logue’s, but the restaurant’s reputation is for good, home-style cooking. The daily specials on any given day at Logue’s include country-fried chicken, pork chops, veal parmesan, or even homemade goulash.

If you’re a biscuits-and-gravy connoisseur, you probably already know that many of the best restaurants have a cutoff time—a point by which they’ve either run out of gravy for the day or have simply stopped making it. Luckily, Logue’s serves breakfast all day, including biscuits and gravy, so there’s never a bad time to stop by.

And if the B&G alone is not enough to fill you up, try the Farmer’s Breakfast: two eggs on a biscuit or toast covered with gravy. Logue’s also features a kids menu and a fifty-five-and-older menu that make it the perfect place to go with Grandma and the kids.—*Evan Wood*
LoguesRestaurant.com • 121 Huckleberry Drive
573-221-9742 (takeout) • 573-248-854 (restaurant)

her dad’s; he is the Andy in the menu item’s name. The story goes that every year Jessica’s family had a camp-out on Memorial Day weekend, and both sides of her family came together for the occasion.

“He would make the same breakfast every time,” says Jessica, “beer biscuits and gravy.” When asked where this tradition came from, Jessica says: “My father’s family is very German.” She adds that cooking with beer is commonplace for that side of the family.

In recent years, as eating brunch has become en vogue, biscuits and gravy dishes have developed something of a reputation for being a hangover cure.

“When you have them, it’s usually the morning after,” says Jessica of her restaurant’s B&G. But before you write this off as a gimmicky play on hair of the dog, just try it. Jessica says that there’s a zing to the dish, and that’s probably the most apt way to describe the taste. It’s a savory flavor that immediately announces itself when you take a bite—not quite salty, just a bit of “zing” cutting underneath the rich, hearty taste of gravy.

In case you’re wondering, Benton Park Cafe’s choice of beer for the beer biscuits

and gravy is Budweiser. It’s in keeping with Andy’s original recipe, and it seems appropriate given the restaurant’s proximity to the Anheuser-Busch brewery.

Everything on the menu at Benton Park Cafe looks good, but Jessica says that they move a lot of orders of B&G. People are familiar with this dish in particular, and they will let the restaurant staff know if the biscuits don’t taste right.

This dish has come a long way since the Memorial Day camp-outs of Jessica’s childhood, but she says the actual recipe hasn’t changed much. Maybe someone in your family cooks biscuits and gravy that will always be your favorite, but be prepared to give Andy’s version at Benton Park Cafe a close second.—*Evan Wood*

BentonParkCafe.com • 1900 Arsenal Street • 314-771-7200

Cape Girardeau
SANDS PANCAKE HOUSE

Sands Pancake House is housed in a nondescript building along one of Cape Girardeau’s main thoroughfares. Although easily over-



Sands Pancake House has some of the best biscuits and gravy in Southeast Missouri. However, other favorites include blueberry pancakes, a bacon double cheeseburger called Betty’s Big Burger, homemade desserts like blackberry cobbler, sweet tea, and more.



Andy’s Beer Biscuits and Gravy at Benton Park Cafe incorporates Budweiser beer to give it the remarkable taste for which it has become known.

COURTESY OF BENTON PARK CAFE

St. Louis
BENTON PARK CAFE

Every family has one recipe that defines a certain dish for them. It could be your grandmother’s fried chicken, or maybe it’s your dad’s chili. Whatever the case, you and your family tend to think of it as the pinnacle of that particular food. But to outsiders, whose palettes are unclouded by nostalgia, these dishes can sometimes prove underwhelming.

Andy’s Beer Biscuits and Gravy at Benton Park Cafe, though, provides a glaring, impossible-to-ignore exception to this rule.

When you see it on the menu at Benton Park Cafe, you might have a couple of questions. Namely, you may ask, “Why put beer in biscuits and gravy?” According to Benton Park Cafe’s owner, Jessica Anderson, the recipe is

looked, the breakfast joint is a staple for area natives. It’s also one of the few remaining locally owned cafes in town. As the largest city in Southeast Missouri, Cape attracts an increasing number of chain restaurants every year. This means that breakfast restaurant options are mostly restricted to the likes of Cracker Barrel, Denny’s, or the newly acquired IHOP. In the midst of these big-name players, Sands stands out.

Sands’s specialty is clearly breakfast. Their list of early morning eats spans two pages, with a small but appetizing choice of lunch items on the back. The cash-only restaurant

is only open until 2 PM every day and offers a generous variety of pancakes, waffles, breakfast meats, and yes, biscuits and gravy.

Equally generous are Sands’s portions; their half order of biscuits and gravy is big enough to be considered a full serving at any other restaurant. This stems from the family-style atmosphere, one where customers greet each other as they walk in, and portion sizes mimic those of a concerned grandmother.

Sands is famous for its perfectly light and fluffy pancakes. They keep the recipe a closely guarded secret; even if you come for the pancakes, you should stay for the B&G.

It comes as a simple order of two house-made biscuits topped with creamy milk gravy and sausage bits. Even the most judicious salt and pepper users will probably find Sands’s gravy to be perfectly seasoned. The topping is just savory enough to complement the sweet biscuits below. The dish rounds out with a slight peppery taste.

Like the restaurant itself, which is still very much the same as when it opened in 1953, the stick-to-your-ribs biscuits and gravy at Sands Pancake House is perfect as is and should stay that way.—*Paige Pritchard*

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