



# BEST NEW RESTAURANTS

BY **CHÉRÉ COEN**  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **DENNY CULBERT**

## ▶ ANOTHER YEAR PASSES IN

Acadiana and the culinary scene grows more diverse and more expansive, giving visitors and residents alike endless opportunities for fabulous dining experiences. Some longstanding establishments, such as Blue Dog of Lafayette and RiverFront Louisiana Grill of Abbeville, have branched out into new markets or moved into new spaces. L'Auberge Casino Resort continues to evolve its dining scene with Modern Pantry, a casual restaurant that's open 24 hours a day. In Lafayette, franchises by the dozens have moved in with new shopping opportunities.

The following are five outstanding new restaurants, helmed by chefs and owners who continue to reinvent the culinary wheel. All five are perfect examples at how Acadiana continues to be one of America's greatest culinary hubs.



**DOMINIQUE MALBROUGH LEFT HOUMA TO STUDY THE CULINARY ARTS AND FOOD SERVICE MANAGEMENT AT JOHNSON AND WALES UNIVERSITY IN CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA.**

She became a chef and worked for Restaurant August and Chef John Besh in New Orleans. Along the way, she also completed two levels of wine certification through the International Sommelier Guild and the Wine and Spirits Education Trust's Level 3 Advanced Certification in Wine and Spirits. It's this combination of great food and appropriate wines that led her to return to Houma.

Her mother had operated Café Dominique's in Houma since 2008, but when she retired, Malbrough took over the operation and renamed it Dominique's Wine Boutique & Bistro, combining her love for food and wine. The idea, Malbrough explains, was to bring in diners and educate them about wine and how the two complement each other well.

Weekday lunches include appetizers such as colossal crab and lobster cakes and baked brie and a variety of salads, soups, sandwiches and flatbreads. The menu changes quarterly with the seasons.

"We try to change it up," Malbrough says. "We try to make the menu fun."

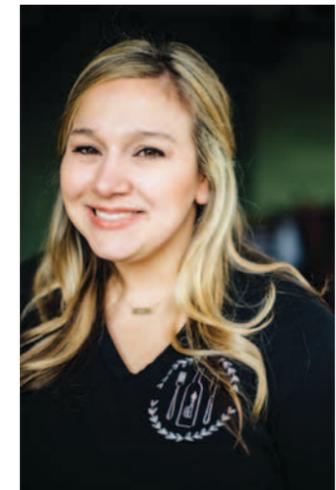
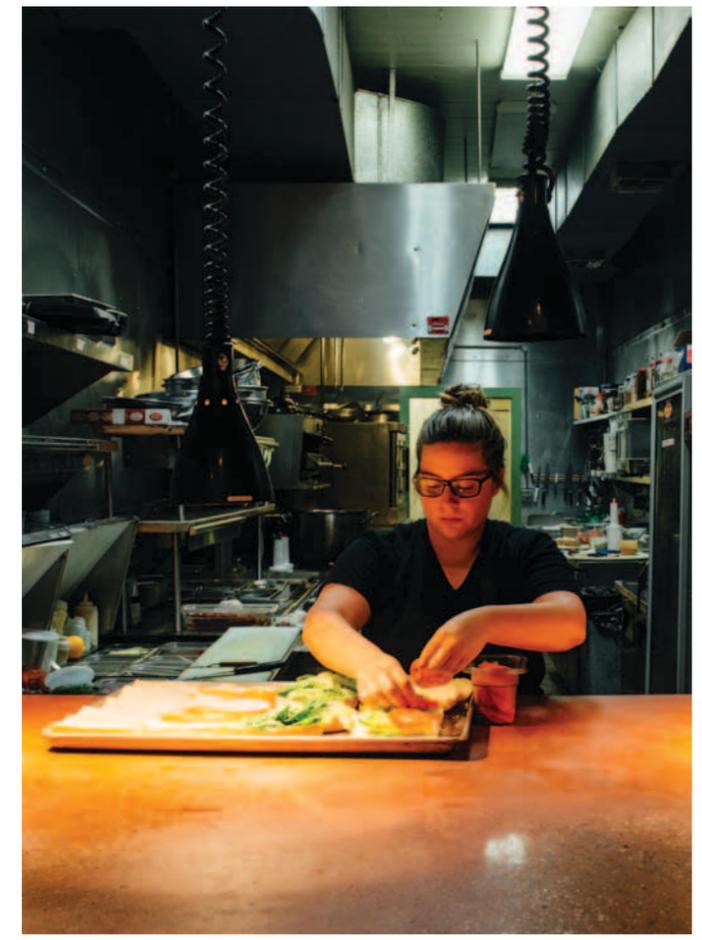
In addition, Dominique's serves wine dinners (four courses with pairings), offers catering and sells wine in the front wine shop.

This summer, in addition to weekday lunches, Dominique's will serve cocktails, wine and small bites at the bar between 2 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

"We have a beautiful patio that's right on the bayou," she says.

The restaurant will remain a weekday affair, Malbrough insists, to allow time for her to be with family. In her former culinary jobs outside the state, family time wasn't as much a priority so working long hours in the restaurant business wasn't as difficult.

"In Louisiana, there's a lot of family time," Malbrough says. "Up there [in North Carolina], it's not like that. It doesn't hurt as much up there."



**IN 2015, DOMINIQUE'S WINE BOUTIQUE & BISTRO RECEIVED A WINE SPECTATOR AWARD OF EXCELLENCE, AN HONOR GIVEN TO RESTAURANTS WITH EXCEPTIONAL WINE LISTS.**



8013 Main St., Houma  
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dominiquesbistro.com

# DOMINIQUE'S

**WINE BOUTIQUE & BISTRO**



WINE IS AS IMPORTANT AS THE MENU, GREEN SAID, AND CREATIVE COCKTAILS ARE SERVED AT THE RESTAURANT'S LOVELY BAR ACCENTED BY LAW BOOKS AND PHOTOS OF THE 1910 FIRE.

# 1910

**IN 1910, LAKE CHARLES WAS DEALT A DEVASTATING FIRE, ONE THAT ENGULFED DOWNTOWN AND DESTROYED THE 1890 COURTHOUSE AND CITY HALL. BUT THE CITY ROSE FROM THE ASHES AND BEGAN ANEW.**

The newest addition to Lake Charles' culinary scene, 1910, plays on this historic theme, using a flame as its icon. The idea came about after owner Andrew Green found the Phoenix Building at the corner of Kirby and Ryan streets as the perfect

location for his new culinary venture. The restaurant is situated across from the current courthouse and historic City Hall, both built in 1911, and a nod to the fire and the city's resurrection seemed the perfect name.

"After the fire burned most of downtown, at that point they were looking forward," Green says. "For us, 1910 is an ode to that, this new Lake Charles looking forward into the 21st century, hoping to grow the city and make things happen."

Green is a former law student whose heart was in the culinary arts. He originally planned to practice law until he acquired enough money to open a restaurant, but his father talked him out of that plan, insisting he head straight into his dream. After working for restaurants such as 121 Bistro, La Truffe Sauvage and Restaurant Calla, Green did just that.

1910 serves up classical dishes – "no crazy stuff," Green insists – but still innovative and occasionally unusual entrees, such as wild boar tenderloin and an elk rib eye.

"We're trying to get people to think about maximizing their experience of a fine quality dinner with a high quality wine," he says, adding that wine pairing dinners are offered as well.



949 Ryan St., Lake Charles  
(337) 602-6278  
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# LA CRÊPERIE

## BISTRO

COMBINE THE DULCE DE LECHE CREPE WITH THE BISTRO'S ESPRESSO POUR OVER - USING LOCALLY ROASTED BEANS BY ANALINE & CO. - AND IT'S A TRIP THROUGH PARADISE.



1921 Kaliste Saloom Road in Parc Lafayette, Lafayette // (337) 484-1010 // [lacreperiebistro.com](http://lacreperiebistro.com)



**MONICA PADRON TRAVELED THE WORLD WITH HER HUSBAND EDGARDO, WHO WORKED FOR YEARS IN THE OIL INDUSTRY. NATIVES OF VENEZUELA WITH EUROPEAN PARENTS, THE COUPLE EVENTUALLY LANDED IN LAFAYETTE.**

But there was one aspect of their travels that was lacking in Louisiana – a crêperie.

"I love crêpes," Padron says. "Everywhere I went, I ate crêpes."

Padron enjoyed them in India, England, Italy and, of course France, the mother country of crêpes, so when she and her husband, plus her sister-in-law Johana Padron and her husband Ricardo Angulo, decided to open a restaurant in Lafayette, the theme was already set.

La Crêperie serves traditional crepes one might see in France, but it also incorporates the many flavors of the countries the couple visited throughout their lifetime. The Night in Madrid, for instance, marries manchego cheese, Spanish chorizo and a drizzle of olive oil, a dish diners would never spot in a French crêperie. The Mediterranean combines grilled chicken, hummus, red onions, feta cheese, tomatoes, Kalamata olives and a touch of olive oil. For something closer to home, there's the New York crepe filled with roast beef, pepper Jack cheese, tomatoes, red onions and horseradish.

"We really picked out flavors for crepes from other parts of the world," Edgardo Padron explains.

La Crêperie offers both savory and sweet crepes, the latter popular for those looking for a unique dessert spot. The Dulce de Leche, for instance, arrives filled with a creamy caramel and a dollop of housemade whipped cream.

The establishment is the Padrons' first foray into owning and operating a restaurant and the community's response has been positive. In addition to serving crepes, the bistro offers paninis, salads, soups and gelato from Lafayette's Carpe Diem Gelato-Espresso Bar downtown. There's also a nice selection of wine and beer and a Happy Hour with small bites on weekdays.



"VIETNAMESE FOOD IS CONSIDERED ONE OF THE HEALTHIEST FOODS THROUGHOUT THE GLOBE BECAUSE IT USES FRESH HERBS AND LIMITED OIL," DANNY NGUYEN SAYS.

# BLU BASIL

## DANNY NGUYEN AND HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW CHRIS NGUYEN INTRODUCED LAFAYETTE TO VIETNAMESE CLASSICS WITH SAIGON NOODLES, A RESTAURANT LOCATED IN A STRIP SHOPPING CENTER THAT QUICKLY BECAME A HIT.

The duo longed for a larger space where they could experiment more with modern Asian-Vietnamese dishes and allow diners to relax in a hip but casual space.

They took over a corner restaurant in the Times Plaza Shopping Center near Acadiana Mall in Lafayette, utilizing a larger kitchen to create new and innovative dishes. There's the Vietnamese standard Pho, a Vietnamese meat broth that's served with rice noodles and a variety of herbs and flavors, plus curries, grilled meats, vermicelli noodle bowls, lettuce wraps that are as delicious as they are perfect for carb haters and sugar cane shrimp for a sweet take on Louisiana seafood.

For something more adventurous, there's fried bacon bao, a steamed rice patty stuffed with pork and eggs that's deep fried and cut like a slider and accented by sautéed onions, mushrooms, bacon and alfalfa sprouts. The dish is one of Nguyen's latest creations.

"I'm so proud of it," he says of the fried bacon bao. "I let all the staff try it, let the customers try it and they loved it."

Another new dish Nguyen introduced was savory crêpes made from rice flour and eggs, wrapped in lettuce and highlighted with a tangy fish sauce and cucumber slices.

So far, Lafayette diners are up for the new experiences.

"There are so many people here who are open to new things," Nguyen says.

Blu Basil also serves craft cocktails, beer and wine and refreshing coconut water served in a real coconut. To top off the meal, don't miss the iced Vietnamese coffee where drip coffee is placed on top of cream in a lovely display that's eventually stirred with ice.

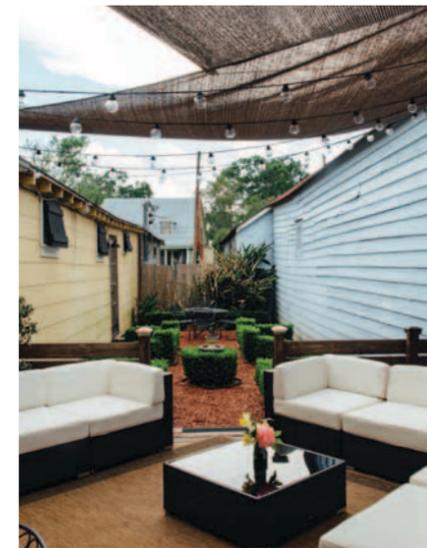


5451 Johnston St., Lafayette  
(337) 456-1120  
blubasilwineandgrill.com





# GRAND COTEAU BISTRO



**CHEF CHRISTOPHER THAMES MIGHT BE BEST KNOWN FOR BEING NAMED CHAMPION ON THE FOOD NETWORK'S "CHOPPED" IN 2011, BUT HIS CAREER SPANS THE COUNTRY AND IN A WIDE VARIETY OF EXPERIENCES.**

The Culinary Institute of America graduate has worked as executive chef for the Jefferson Hotel and the World Bank in Washington, D.C., a traveling

chef for Cirque du Soleil, and as owner of his own catering business.

He brings this vast culinary background to Grand Coteau Bistro, revitalizing the former Catahoula's restaurant in Grand Coteau and reinstating fine dining to the region.

Thames hails from Beaumont, Texas, but spent summers in New Orleans where his grandfather was academic dean at the Baptist Seminary.

"I'm an I-10 rat is what I tell people," Thames says. "I had both influences of Cajun and Creole cooking."

In his last year of high school, Thames veered into vocational school with half the day devoted to culinary training. He went from an uninterested teenager with bad grades to an A student overnight.

"Six month after graduating high school I was in culinary school," he explained. "I loved every minute of it and I knew I was home. A chef is such a different breed and I loved playing with fire – we're such pyromaniacs – and there is something to be said of sharp knives."

Thames has worked the East Coast, Seattle and Texas and served a number of famous people, but the Gulf South eventually drew him home. He landed in Baton Rouge where he met Leon Steele, who worked in Louisiana's Main Street program. Steele knew about the former Catahoula's space and the next thing Thames knew, he was helping his own restaurant.

"It's been a blur since," he said of opening Grand Coteau Bistro in the fall of 2015. "But I'm here to set up roots."

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