



Grey Sweater in Oklahoma City

2021 FOOD WORTH THE DRIVE

FOR THE EIGHTH YEAR RUNNING, OKLAHOMA TODAY'S EDITORS TRAVELED TO EVERY CORNER OF THE STATE TO BRING BACK WORD OF THE MANY WONDERS OF OUR SHARED CULINARY SCENE. WHETHER YOU'RE CRAVING A CHICKEN-FRIED STEAK, CAJUN DELIGHTS, INDULGENT DESSERTS, OR JAPANESE SOUL FOOD, OUR GUIDE TO OKLAHOMA'S DRIVE-WORTHY EATERIES IS HERE TO HELP.

Editor's Note: Each of the restaurants in this story was open and operational as of press time, but due to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, it is best to call ahead or check social media to ensure restaurants will be open when you plan to visit. Please travel safely and follow CDC health guidelines to protect yourself and others.



Ollie's Juke Joint & Café in Kingston



Big Dipper Creamery in Tulsa



Angel's Diner in McAlester



Route 66 Café at the Market in Clinton

Bristow THE BEACH HOUSE

THE BEACH HOUSE in Bristow serves a small but well-curated selection of down-home goodness, including crispy fried mushrooms, decadent bacon cheese fries, and a pork chop so tender it should be on the front of a Hallmark card. But if the menu were Destiny's Child, the restaurant's beef would definitely be the Beyoncé of the group. It makes sense—the family behind the Beach House has been raising their own Limousin cows since 1978. They know what it takes to make great beef long before it hits the grill. "We don't do much to it," says co-owner Cody Beach. "My philosophy is, if I'm going to

spend so much time and money raising them, I don't want to cover it up." The Beaches—Cody, his mother, father, sister, and brother-in-law—serve sirloins, rib eyes, hamburger steaks, and an extremely popular chicken-fried steak, but customers might regret not getting the heftiest option on the menu. At sixteen ounces, the Hungry Man Porterhouse comes at you aggressively, dominating the plate like a meaty monster. But apply gentle pressure to the perfectly seared salt-and-pepper crust, and the knife slips through the tender meat effortlessly. One bite and it's clear that this succulent, delicious beast just wants to hug you from the inside all night long. —**Karlie Ybarra**

WHEN AND WHERE:

- > 4 to 8 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday and 4 to 9 p.m. Friday and Saturday
- > 223 South Main Street in Bristow
- > (918) 833-0016
- > beachhousebristow.com

DID YOU KNOW?

The Beach House's building once hosted a beloved restaurant called Hamburger King. The private room in the back of the building became an impromptu nightclub whenever Bob Wills came by. Hoping to run into the legend of Western Swing, touring musicians from all over the country would stop by Hamburger King whenever they were in town.

Clinton ROUTE 66 CAFÉ AT THE MARKET

FROM THE MOMENT visitors walk through the door of Clinton's Route 66 Café at the

Market, they're met with buzzing conversation, the rich smells of fried food, and the historic iconography of the Mother Road. All of these sensations are consistent with the restaurant's history, as the building has welcomed travelers and locals since the 1930s, when it was founded as Dorsey's Fruit Market before closing in the 1980s. In the 2000s, several restaurateurs took unsuccessful stabs at resurrecting the place until 2017, when Judy and Bruce Lamborn created a major national and international tourist destination for those traveling along Route 66. The couple works hard to prepare great food and provide a warm and comfortable space for locals and adventurers alike. "We get a lot of travelers here," Judy says. "We get Europeans coming in here out the wazoo just doing Route 66." Bruce works the grill, while Judy takes care of everything else from running out food, greeting customers, taking orders, and



JURITCHEY

Beach House
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JURITCHEY

DaVinci's Coffeehouse and Gelateria
This Enid eatery offers a rotating selection of twenty to thirty types of gelato, including salted caramel peanut butter cup, Evil Phoenix Chocolate with an added kick of cayenne, and even caramel popcorn.

sometimes even working as a fry cook when things get busy. The restaurant is known for all-day breakfast, rotating daily specials, and fan-favorite dishes ranging from a renowned chicken-fried steak and onion rings to sweet cream pancakes and Bruce's specialty omelets. And while Judy and Bruce both have their favorite dishes—for Bruce it's the omelet, and for Judy it's the club sandwich on wheatberry toast—they both agree the café is not known for just one thing. “They just love everything,” Bruce says of his customers. “But some people tell us our chicken-fried steak is the best they've ever had.”

It's not just the hand-breaded cube steak fried to perfection in Judy's original recipe or the delicious crunch of the coarse pepper fried batter—the same batter as the equally famous onion rings. What really shines here are the retro paintings hanging on the walls that make visitors feel they've stepped back into America's past and the warm smiles from staff as they refill coffee or bring an extra cinnamon roll. But more than anything, there's a sense of home that settles in as diners take a bite of a home-cooked meal so good it's almost better than what Grandma used to make.

Mick Cornett, the former mayor of Oklahoma City and a previous customer, may have said it best when he was urged to trek fifteen miles down I-40 to try the place after a meeting in nearby Weatherford: “This is worth the drive.” —**Abigail Hall**

WHEN AND WHERE:
 > 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday and Wednesday through Saturday, and 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday
 > 301 West Gary Boulevard in Clinton

> (580) 445-7008
 > facebook.com/route66clinton

PRO TIP: Route 66 Café at the Market fills up at lunchtime, and if you don't get there early, they could run out of specific items. The rush begins at noon and sometimes doesn't let up until they close at 2 p.m. on weekdays, and on Saturday the restaurant can be packed from open to close, so make sure to mask up and get there early.

Enid
DA VINCI'S COFFEEHOUSE AND GELATERIA

WALKING INTO ONE of Da Vinci's four locations around Enid, it's hard to decide which sense is most delighted. The bold smell of beans fresh from Enid-based Vitruvian Coffee Roasters—a Da Vinci's exclusive—dazzles the nose while a frozen, lickable rainbow beckons hungry eyes toward the gleaming gelato case.

Da Vinci's has offered an encyclopedic menu of specialty coffee drinks since it first opened in 2003: nineteen white chocolate, twelve caramel, twenty-three chocolate, and six “something different” options. Hot or iced drinks run the gamut from the cute—Cupid's Caramel Kiss features caramel, vanilla, and hazelnut—to the fancy, like the Royal Truffle, which combines chocolate, English toffee, and almond. However, Da Vinci's found yet another use for milk, cream, and sugar in 2016 when it began selling gelato. Four years down the line, Da Vinci's sells an ever-changing selection of twenty to thirty varieties at a time, including salted caramel peanut butter cup, Evil Phoenix

Chocolate with an added kick of cayenne, and caramel popcorn. “If you go to Rome, you'll see the Italians using the exact kind of machine we have,” says co-owner Nick Jackson. “It's some of the best gelato in the world.” In early 2020, Da Vinci's owners partnered with chef Heston Swenn—formerly of the renowned restaurant PaneVino in Enid—to further expand its food offerings with Catapult Cuisine. Now, customers can grab a Southwest breakfast burrito; a brie, fig, and prosciutto panini; a steak and caprese salad; a hummus and veggie bento box; or about twenty other options to eat before they dig into a creamy cup of banana bread gelato—though in this case, no one would be faulted for starting with dessert. —**Karlie Ybarra**

- DA VINCI'S ORIGINAL**
 > 6:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday, 6:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday
 > 2315 West Willow Road in Enid
 > (580) 234-2080
- DA VINCI'S SOUTH**
 > 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Saturday, and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday
 > 813 South Van Buren Street in Enid
 > (580) 297-5507
- DA VINCI'S CENTRAL**
 > 5:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Sunday
 > 525 South Arthur Street in Enid
 > (580) 234-2080
- DA VINCI'S VANCE AFB**
 > 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday
 > On Vance Air Force Base at 806 Elam Road, Building 171 in Enid
 > (580) 234-2080
 > davinciscoffee.com

DID YOU KNOW? What's the difference between ice cream and gelato? Ice cream is churned quickly, which makes the end result up to 90 percent air. Gelato is turned slowly, making its air content much lower. Ice cream also uses much more cream, which coats your tongue and blocks your taste buds. Gelato tends to be richer and more flavorful.

Idabel
PHAT TABB'S BBQ

TABB SINGLETON WAS out on a limb. The owner of Phat Tabb's BBQ in Idabel was forced to trust in himself after being laid off from his twelve-year career as executive sous chef at Emeril Lagasse's famous NOLA Restaurant in New Orleans. “My contract was coming up, and at the same time, COVID-19 hit; NOLA shut down in March,” Singleton says. “Waiting around, I didn't know how long it would take me to get a job. I was planning on getting unemployment, but the way I was raised is, you gotta be working.”

So the former *Chopped* champion bet on himself. A barbecue restaurant was a lifelong dream, and though he had dabbled in barbecue under the name of Phat Tabb through competitions and fundraisers, he felt it was time to make this dream a reality. Singleton took advantage of the opportunity offered by COVID legislation to take some money out of his 401(k).

Working closely with his father, he gathered anything he could for decorations. Old Idabel

Tabb Singleton's new barbecue venture in Idabel is so popular that it frequently sells out.



LORI DUCKWORTH



LORI DUCKWORTH

Low-country gourmet favorites meet Red River geography at Ollie's Juke Joint & Cafe in Kingston.

newspapers, ancient antique items from his mom and dad's house, and trucker hats that he accumulated over the years—including a take-one-leave-one hat exchange—fill the space along with the '80s music playing in the background. And though customers may leave with a new cap and Prince songs stuck in their head, what they'll really remember is the food.

"We serve standard barbecue that includes the basic staples, but we also have our specials like

the cucumber onion salad; not many restaurants around here do it," Singleton says. "We just try to put our own little play on it."

In addition to the White Trash Potato Salad, Redneck Slaw, and Hot Cheeto Mac n' Cheese—macaroni and cheese with spicy Cheetos sprinkled on top—customers flock to the made-from-scratch sauces, rubs, blends, and onion ground-in-house burgers daily. It all adds up to a satisfying experience diners are eager to repeat.

"People keep coming back because we are consistent, and you get your food in less than three minutes," Singleton says.

—Kashea McCowan

WHEN AND WHERE:

- > 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday
- > 1110 South Central Avenue in Idabel
- > (580) 376-1088
- > phattabbsbbq.com

PRO TIP: Though Phat Tabbs doesn't open until 10:30, a line of finger-licking barbecue lovers starts to form outside no later than ten o'clock, and everything is sold out by early afternoon. The tender brisket and homemade sausages are always the first to go, so be sure to get there early for your place in line.

Kingston
OLLIE'S JUKE JOINT & CAFE

CLOSE YOUR EYES and remember the days of the spur-of-the-moment road trip with friends, forgetting for a second that those days have been put on temporary hiatus. What's the one thing every road tripper loves saying? "Turn down this country road; I know a little out-of-the-way place with the most amazing food."

To prepare for the return of the road trip, aim for the Lake Texoma area, where there's a corrugated tin shack tucked in a

bend of the Red River just inside the Oklahoma border. Within is an unforgettable meal—friendly staff, eye-catching décor (groups should plan to sit at one of the round tables in the back; each surrounds a live tree that grows through the floor and out the ceiling), and unforgettable Cajun cuisine prepared by a true master.

Originally from Crossett, Arkansas, which is about nine miles from the Louisiana state line, Yolanda Norris—known in the restaurant as "Boo"—first met owner Ollie Hall while both were employed at the peanut factory in Madill, where they

worked together for more than twenty years and where Yolanda's cooking was legend. When the factory closed in 2016, Ollie said to Boo, "I'm going to build you a restaurant."

He meant it literally—he built every square inch of the place with his own two hands.

"This is her restaurant," he says of his friend and business partner. "I just work here."

When he says this, Boo grins. "I tell him if he steps out of line, I'm going to call corporate," she says wryly. "That means I'm going to call his wife."

Their easygoing friendship is infectious, and diners can't

help but smile at the good vibes. But those vibes are more than magnified by the food. Visitors can't get enough of Cajun favorites like jambalaya, blackened catfish, and classic New Orleans hurricane cocktails. But it's when Boo starts getting creative in the kitchen that her talent really shines. The Gator Bait appetizer is four giant jalapeño peppers stuffed with Boudin, deep fried, and smothered in creamy, spicy Jazzabelle and Comeback sauces—also of Boo's creation. The fan-favorite entrée is Catfish Susie Mae, two blackened catfish fillets layered with creamy crawfish sauce and served over a bed of rice. These, coupled with blues on the radio, a screened-in back porch with windows that allow fresh breezes to blow through even in winter (heaters keep it comfy year-round), and the welcome-all-comers atmosphere, make this an out-of-the-way road trip stop not to be missed.

—Nathan Gunter

WHEN AND WHERE:

- > 5 to 9 p.m. Sunday and Thursday; 5 to 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday
- > 4030 Enos Road in Kingston
- > (580) 745-5783
- > facebook.com/olliesjukejoint

PRO TIP: Be sure to read the menu at Ollie's closely even if you know what you want to order. Boo wrote the descriptions herself, and many of them use her no-nonsense voice to describe each dish and preempt frequently asked customer questions. Take, for instance, this item about the much-loved appetizer Gator Bait: "Stop it folks! This is not what we used to catch the gator with geesh!!"

McAlester
ANGEL'S DINER

WHEN ANGEL BERNHARDT opened her namesake diner in 2006, she didn't need to look very far to find inspiration.

"My parents loved the '50s," Bernhardt says. "They built the Happy Days Hotel just behind the diner. My mom used to tease my dad and say he was her second pick, because she was really going to marry Elvis, but Elvis married Priscilla in 1967. So that's when my mom decided to marry my dad."

From the slick pink Cadillac parked out front to the jukebox entryway, Angel's Diner blasts customers to the past even before they walk through the door. Equally anachronistic and awe-inspiring is the friendly atmosphere within. As Chuck Berry belts about "Maybellene" on the stereo, a chorus of excited hellos and *how are yas* come from every staff member. When a waiter or waitress races over to take an order, they're only in a hurry to help.

With a menu like Angel's, sometimes a little help is in order. The appetizer selection alone contains nearly a dozen entries, including the standout Whistle Stop Fried Green Tomatoes, which are somehow both decadently crispy and refreshingly juicy all at the same time. For the main course, Andy's meatloaf dinner and The King's chicken-fried steak are rich and plentiful, for which hungry travelers will be immensely grateful. On Friday and Saturday nights, Angel's Diner transforms into Angel's Steakhouse and Pub for a feel and fare that's slightly more upscale. But no matter when diners stop by, they should check out the dessert case. Patricia

Tamashii Ramen House

Steeped in the swirling umami flavors of a simmering bone or seafood broth, ramen is a ubiquitous soul food in Japan.



J. MITCHEY

“ They built the Happy Days Hotel just behind the diner. My mom used to tease my dad and say he was her second pick, because she was really going to marry Elvis. ”

Henry makes German chocolate pie, turtle cheesecake, and dozens of other treats fresh each day. Though leaving the comfort of the oversized booths may be difficult—both emotionally and physically after such a satisfying meal—taking a sweet little slice home makes it a bit-sweet departure.

—**Karlie Ybarra**

WHEN AND WHERE:

- > 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday
- > 1402 South George Nigh Expressway in McAlester
- > (918) 423-2633
- > angelsdinerok.com

DID YOU KNOW? Angel

Bernhardt and her staff use more than two hundred pounds of flour per week to bread zucchini bites, Aunt Bea’s fried pickles, Jailhouse Rocking mushrooms, T-Bird onion rings, and many other appetizers and entrées.

Newkirk
CHEEKY BURGER

FIRST-TIME RESTAURANT OWNERS are not usually as savvy as Terry and Karla Cheek. It’s especially difficult in a small town like Newkirk, where the inclination is often to try to be everything to everyone. But Cheeky Burger is sticking to its guns—or rather, its buns—by keeping the menu intentionally limited. The narrow focus allows the Cheeks and their employees to concentrate more energy on making their burgers, sandwiches, and sides consistently great.

“You have to cut it off at some point,” Terry says. “If we add

anything else to the menu, we’ll be taking something off, too.”

Burgers make up the bulk of Cheeky Burger’s fare, and there’s no mystery why they’re so popular. The staff grinds fresh meat each day from 100 percent Angus beef, and it’s handled with extreme care to ensure each griddle-fried patty remains juicy, tender, and evenly cooked all the way through. Sellouts are common, but any leftover meat goes into the next day’s chili.

The pulled pork, featured both on its own sandwich and in a quesadilla, is the same—when it’s sold out, there’s no more until the next day. It’s a beautifully barbecued pork shoulder, pulled while still hot, with a pronounced smoky pecan wood flavor that never feels bitter. Cheeky Burger’s barbecue sauce is lightly sweet, with more of a vinegary kick that really enhances the flavor of the pork.

For sheer chutzpah, though, the prize goes to Cheeky entrées The Original Eagle’s Nest and Dirty Okra. The Eagle’s Nest is filled with fries, chopped bacon, onions, and jalapeños absolutely smothered in melted Colby-Jack cheese and drizzled with buttermilk ranch dressing. Dirty Okra is pretty much the same, but with fried okra subbed in for French fries. They’re delicious, but oh-so-filling, too, so get these to share.

—**Greg Elwell**

WHEN AND WHERE:

- > Call ahead for seasonal hours.
- > 221 North Main Street in Newkirk

Serving classics like burgers, fries, and barbecue, Cheeky Burger in Newkirk keeps its menu simple but delicious.

- > (580) 362-5129
- > cheekyburger.org

PRO TIP: Despite residing in what used to be a Sonic Drive-In, Cheeky Burger is not fast food. Diners should be prepared to wait for at least ten minutes, as every burger is made to order.

Oklahoma City
GREY SWEATER

THERE IS A menu at Grey Sweater, chef/co-owner Andrew Black’s newest concept with Rudy Khouri, but it’s just three items long, it’s only available online, and it tells you almost nothing about what you’re going to eat. That’s because Grey Sweater—the third in a row of Black’s eateries in Oklahoma City’s Deep Deuce neighborhood alongside La



LORI DUCKWORTH

The creative and unexpectedly savory Ice Cream Inception at Grey Sweater in Oklahoma City

Baguette and Black Walnut—is a tasting menu restaurant.

Diners can choose from a five-course, seven-course, or ten-course meal with prices ranging from \$87 to \$177, but they don’t get much say in what those courses are. Someone from the restaurant calls to confirm the reservation and learn about customers’ food allergies a week in advance of the meal.

“There is very little overlap in our menus,” Black says. “So we have some people who come in for the five-course menu and then come back for seven courses the next week and ten the week after that. Each one is a different experience.”

On the one hand, each seating is a chance to expand one’s palate in the capable hands of a world-class chef. On the other, that duck breast slow-seared for thirty minutes to render all the delicious fat in the skin into a crispy rind for incredibly succulent fowl becomes a once-in-a-lifetime dish instead of an every-month mainstay.

Dinner at Grey Sweater—the only meal the restaurant serves—sates the stomach and the mind with dishes so esoteric they might elicit a giggle before the first bite, quickly turning into a satisfied silence as the skill and artistry of each course overwhelms the senses.

There’s also a sense of fun in the experience, from meticulous dishes with names like Oyster in the Snow and Beet Explosion in the Garden to Black himself, who seems to dance his way through plating each course.

Diners should walk in ready to play, ready to go on a food

journey that is always changing and evolving, and ready to enjoy the over-the-top ambiance. With only forty-two guests per night, the staff isn’t trying to flip the seat for maximum profit—it belongs to the diner for the evening. —**Greg Elwell**

WHEN AND WHERE:

- > 5:30-10 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday
- > Reservations are required.
- > 100 Northeast Fourth Street in Oklahoma City
- > (405) 445-6274
- > greysweaterokc.com

PRO TIP: A trio of wine pairings—silver, gold, or platinum—are available, but guests also may order cocktails or wine by the glass or bottle. Black says he’ll soon be adding another option, however: a water menu with H₂O from around the world.

Oklahoma City and Edmond
TAMASHII RAMEN HOUSE

STEEPED IN THE swirling umami flavors of a simmering bone or seafood broth, ramen is a ubiquitous soul food in Japan.

“It’s kind of like pizza,” says Wakana Kamesato Sebacher, describing ramen’s popularity in her native country, which is home to more than 10,000 restaurants and pubs that serve the dish.

Wakana, who co-owns Tamashii Ramen with her husband and head chef Matthew Sebacher, came to Oklahoma fifteen years ago to attend college. Though sushi could be found throughout Oklahoma City’s metro area, she missed the familiar comfort foods she grew



Tonkotsu ramen and the Chashudon rice bowl, top, are crowd favorites at Tamashii Ramen House's Oklahoma City and Edmond locations.

LORI DUCKWORTH

up with. Matthew, who already had a flair for cooking, traveled to his wife's hometown of Okinawa, where he studied with local chefs, friends, and family. In 2015, they opened Tamashii's Oklahoma City location, followed by one in Edmond in 2018. It was challenging at first, since Oklahomans largely weren't familiar with this genre of Japanese cuisine. It didn't take long, however, for word to spread about the tasty little shop in Midtown. As Wakana says, "Soul food appeals to everyone."

The restaurant's most popular soup, which Wakana recommends for first time visitors, is Tonkotsu. In this dish, hearty wheat noodles in a savory, slightly creamy broth are topped with braised pork belly, bamboo, green onions, a halved soft-boiled egg, and splash of black garlic oil. Miso Butter Corn and vegan are a couple of other varieties on the menu, but Wakana's favorite is Tsukemen, a dense pork- and fish-based broth that comes with thicker dipping noodles served in a separate bowl and submerged in the broth before being gleefully gobbled down with the accompanying pork belly, seaweed, and other accoutrements.

Before you ascend into slurp heaven though, take note. One of the greatest must-try dishes at this ramen house is not even ramen. Chashudon—a divine rice bowl enveloped with shredded pork belly, green onion, and a secret combination of sauces—ideally would be served alongside a full gospel choir singing its praises. But fear not: Your tastebuds will testify.

—Megan Rossman

WHEN AND WHERE:

> 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 11 a.m. to

10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday
 > 321 Northwest Eighth Street in Oklahoma City
 > (405) 517-0707
 > 132 East Fifth Street in Edmond
 > (405) 920-8234
 > tamashiiokc.com

PRO TIP: For those having trouble deciding, one option is to order Tamashii's garlic fried rice Chashudon-style. And for those looking to experiment with the dish, garlic fried rice also comes in Karaagedon, Monster, and T-rex styles.

Tishomingo
LATTE DA COFFEE HOUSE

FOR THOSE LOOKING to catch a glimpse of the ultimate pop culture power couple, Tishomingo is a major destination. Love for Blake Shelton and Gwen Stefani—especially in light of the superstars' recent engagement—makes up as much of the atmosphere in this small town as nitrogen does, especially at the mothership location of Shelton's restaurant chain Ole Red.

But if Ole Red is the buzzing neon sign over Tishomingo, Latte Da Coffee House is its beating heart. Opened in 2010—before Blake planted the flag for his countrified empire on Main Street—this place serves as a community hub in this small town. That's no accident: Owner Kristie Robnett is a former Johnston County Chamber of Commerce president.

"I wanted to create a different atmosphere than what we had—a little events center, a place you could come and sit down with your friends you hadn't seen in a while and have lunch with them," Robnett says. "A place

where college students can do their homework or where older ladies can meet their friends. And they don't feel rushed or feel like they need to buy something every hour to sit here."

That said, those who do buy something every hour will never run out of options. Grilled paninis are the specialty—Robnett's favorite is the Greek Panini, with kalamata olives on multigrain ciabatta—but there's a little something for everyone. Winter road trippers will want to warm up with a cup of baked potato soup when it's on special—look on Facebook, because it sells out—while healthy diners will love digging into a selection of salads. The Three-Berry Salad comes with strawberries, blueberries, and whatever others are in season, along with grilled chicken and Robnett's secret-recipe house dressing. Breakfast lovers won't want to miss the sausage, egg, and cheese biscuit or breakfast burritos with egg, bell pepper, and onion with sausage or ham and grilled in a panini press.

But no matter what time of day diners visit, they won't want to skip Latte Da's coffee, prepared by the friendly, well-trained staff. Even when COVID forced a short shutdown of the place earlier this year, Robnett bought a new coffee maker and gave some of her regulars—a group of old men who she says get together every morning like clockwork to gossip over a cup of joe—a key to the place so they could safely make their own.

That's the kind of service and care a coffee-shop-turned-community-space offers, and visitors come back again and again for a taste of Robnett's sweet small-town hospitality.

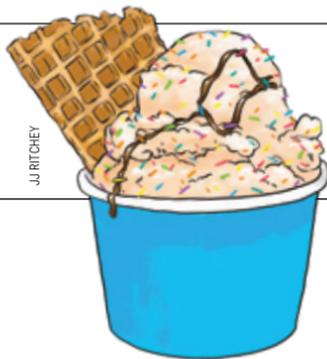
—Nathan Gunter



Latte Da Coffee House

Owner Kristie Robnett bought a new coffee maker and gave some of her regulars—a group of old men who get together every morning to gossip over a cup of joe—a key to the place so they could let themselves in.

JJ RITCHIEY



JJ RITCHEY

“ I wanted to create a different atmosphere. A place where college students can do their homework or where older ladies can meet their friends. ”

Big Dipper Creamery

Co-owner Sami Cooper takes her staff out to pick organic fruit and buys from local farms so they—and the customers—can have what she calls the “farm-to-cone experience” with flavors like Wild Sumac Sorbet and Sand Plum Streusel.

WHEN AND WHERE:

- > 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday
- > 406 West Main Street in Tishomingo
- > (580) 371-2828
- > facebook.com/lattedatish

PRO TIP: Tishomingo’s Main Street is undergoing renovation, so parking in front of Latte Da is tricky. Park on the side street by Dairy Queen next door, and it’s a few steps into the coffee shop.

**Tulsa
BIG DIPPER CREAMERY**

WHEN IT COMES to opulent ice cream, butter fat is key. And they use plenty of it at Big Dipper Creamery, located inside Mother Road Market in Tulsa. Ultrarich cream combined with creative, high-quality local ingredients puts Big Dipper in a culinary cosmos of its own. Co-owner Sami Cooper and her staff make two and a half gallons of ice cream at a time, giving them quality control that ensures customers get nothing but the best. Everything is made from scratch, from the cones to the butterscotch-soaked cake in the Ooey Goey Butter Cake ice cream and the pulverized Oreo clones in the Ultimate Cookies and Cream. Honeycomb Lavender—Big Dipper’s most popular flavor—is made by steeping organic dried lavender buds in cream for forty-eight hours before adding honeycomb, a crunchy, spun-sugar candy, into the mix. The final result is a rich bouquet of delicate flavors that melt across the tongue.

There’s always something novel to try at Big Dipper, and seasonal flavors are a specialty. In autumn, apple cider sorbet, sweet potato with toasted marsh-

mallow, and candied pear with blue cheese make appearances, while spring and summer bring fresh mint and chocolate chip, rosewater and pistachio, sweet corn with raspberry sauce, and varieties made with strawberries from Bixby and Porter’s famously lush peaches. During growing seasons, Cooper takes the staff out to pick organic fruit and buys from local farms so they—and the customers—can have what she calls the “farm-to-cone experience.” These local flavors form the bases for varieties of ice cream like Wild Sumac Sorbet and Sand Plum Streusel.

“We want people to try some flavors that get them out of their comfort zones,” she says.

But if the comfort zone is where you want to stay, this is a safe space. Madagascar Vanilla Bean and dark chocolate may be among Big Dipper’s most conventional selections, but there are no bad choices at this sweet spot. —Megan Rossman

WHEN AND WHERE:

- > 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday; 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday and Saturday; and 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Sunday. As of press time, Big Dipper was open for patio dining and pickup only.
- > 1124 South Lewis Avenue
- > (918) 948-8208
- > bigdippercreamerytulsa.com

PRO TIP: Sami suggests ordering a scoop of ice cream—vegan and gluten-free options are available—on top of a cooked-to-order bubble waffle.

**Tulsa
FOOLISH THINGS BAR & BISCUIT**

FEW PLACES STRIKE a balance between the day’s

three major meals like Foolish Things Bar & Biscuit in Tulsa. Co-owner Justin Carpenter opened the café in 2018, six years after launching his first craft coffee spot, Foolish Things Coffee Co., in 2012. With a menu that features cups of espresso and veggie biscuits by day and blends of unique cocktails and short-rib wontons by night, there is nothing foolish about pairing delicious gourmet biscuits with all-day drinks.

“There are a decent amount of places to get brunch and a decent amount of places to get cocktails,” Carpenter says. “But there was nothing that was brunch and coffee-focused in the morning and craft cocktail-focused in the evening.”

The idea for the place blossomed when Carpenter realized that in cities like Chicago and Nashville, gourmet biscuits were becoming a hot commodity. He saw the potential of opening a brunch and cocktail bar concept in Tulsa, and that was the catalyst for starting Bar & Biscuit.

Each morning, patrons receive a menu that features drinks like rosewater lemonade and espresso macchiato. Fresh Bonuts—fried biscuit dough balls sprinkled with strawberry powder and topped with blueberry jam and soft cheese—are prepared fresh daily along with breakfast favorites like the fried chicken biscuit with honey butter, arugula, blue cheese, and a sunny-side-up egg. The Popeye’s fried chicken sandwich and the Grilled Chicken Sammie are house favorites and pair well with any of the evening drinks. The Old Fashioned or

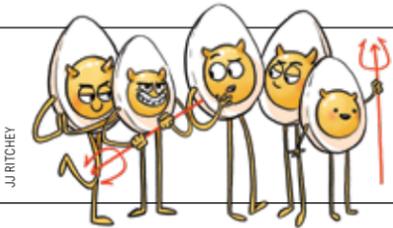
Big Dipper Creamery creates everything they sell in-house, from the cones to the cake and cookies mixed into the ice cream.



LORI DUCKWORTH



LORI DUCKWORTH



JJ RITCHIEY

The Lokal

The restaurant's deviled eggs are so popular, they have their own dedicated staff person, who breads about two thousand eggs every week and even has a flaming egg tattoo.



the Welcome Back—tequila, rosemary syrup, lime, and angostura float—are among the most popular.

Whether visitors are dining in for a late breakfast or lunch, Bar & Biscuit offers brunch that runs from nine to four, and items like pan-seared pork loin, pork belly deviled eggs, walnut turtle pie, and many varieties of tasty beverages are available until ten o'clock each night.

—Kashea McCowan

WHEN AND WHERE:

- > 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday
- > 3524F South Peoria Avenue in Tulsa
- > (918) 289-4156
- > barandbiscuit.com

PRO TIP: Take part in the weekly Wednesday dinner, a four-course meal that features theme-inspired dishes and complementary wine pairings. On Thursday nights, sit back and enjoy jazz by local artists.

catfish—but his interesting flavor profiles, liberal-but-sane portions, and high-quality ingredients make food that feels like a warm hug even hours later.

When diners order Williams' meatloaf, they certainly feel the love. Made with bison from Lawton's Comanche Farms, each loaf is wrapped in bacon, sliced generously, placed upon a glorious mound of chunky mashed potatoes, and anointed with thick, brown gravy. It's not Mom's meatloaf: It's much better (but you don't have to tell her). Another beloved feature is the sweet and spicy blueberry bourbon BBQ sauce that tops The Lokal's bone-in pork chops and bison meatballs.

If customers aren't sweet on the place by the end of the meal, a slice of Denise Mitchell's cheesecake will spark a food crush. The former Caramel Monkey Bakery owner crafts twelve to sixteen cheesecakes a week exclusively for The Lokal in whatever flavor strikes her fancy.

But no matter which they order—Snickers, key lime, strawberry lemonade, or the crowd-favorite banana pudding—it's safe to say everyone leaves The Lokal with a big smile and a full belly.

—Karlie Ybarra

WHEN AND WHERE:

- > 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Saturday
- > 10 West Main Street
- > (405) 494-9870
- > thelokalyukon.com

DID YOU KNOW?

One of The Lokal's most popular menu items—fried deviled eggs—has its own dedicated staff. Cliff Wilson hand-breads about two thousand eggs a week, and he even has a flaming egg tattoo on his wrist to celebrate this beloved appetizer.

Below: A pink Cadillac greets visitors and passersby outside Angel's Diner in McAlester.



Foolish Things Bar & Biscuit

Don't let time get in the way of a great meal: Foolish Things Bar & Biscuit in Tulsa offers brunch from nine to four, and many food items and drinks are available until ten o'clock each night.

JJ RITCHIEY

Yukon
THE LOKAL

COMFORT FOOD IS a term that gets tossed around often when describing Oklahoma cuisine. While typical comfort food will satiate hunger, it often leaves diners feeling greasy and filled with regret. At The Lokal, executive chef Randy Williams built his menu around classic staples he knew his fellow Yukonians would love—including chicken-fried steak, burgers, and

Opposite page: Whether for a craft cocktail or a fried chicken biscuit, Foolish Things Bar & Biscuit in Tulsa has your cravings covered.

LORI DUCKWORTH

