

With a little help from dynamic chefs, invigorating restaurant concepts, and the addition of the culinary leader Johnson & Wales University, Charlotte's cuisine and restaurant scene are earning a spot on the map. Named one of the "Top 50 Cities That Sizzle" by *Restaurant News Magazine*, Charlotte's culinary delights are seemingly endless. So prepare your taste buds for savory eats that range from Southern fried chicken to Spanish small plates. Even as dining options continue to multiply throughout growing Charlotte, be sure to know that your meal will always be served with the grace and charm that characterizes this fair city. And as hot new developments continue to make waves, more fresh nightlife options are ready to roll out the red carpet for the Queen City visitor. From mellow jazz clubs to salsa dancing lessons and from major musical acts to low-key brew pubs, Charlotte's nightlife aims to please.



entertainment

Charlotte boasts dining experiences matched by few other destinations. The local scene sizzles with culinary finds just a short walk from the Charlotte Convention Center including **Aquavina**, serving innovative contemporary entrees, **Mimosa Grill** featuring global cuisine with a Southern twist, and **Blue Restaurant & Bar**, offering a multi-cultural menu that takes your taste buds on a whirlwind tour of the Mediterranean. Visitors can't leave town without having sampled traditional Southern staples. For some of the region's best BBQ, head to **Mert's Heart & Soul** in Center City and **Mac's Speed Shop** in South End. National hotspots have been drawn to the Charlotte area as well. These dependable upscale establishments include **The Palm Restaurant**, **Morton's Steakhouse**, **Capital Grille**, **McCormick & Schmicks**, **Ruth's Chris Steak House**, **PF Chang's China Bistro**, **Del Frisco's Double Eagle Steak House**, and more.

The smart city planning and impressive growth in Charlotte's Center City has led to an influx of refreshing dining, entertainment and nightlife options. Beneath the towering skyscrapers, the impressive cityscape of this burgeoning hub offers countless ways to paint the town red and over 150 restaurants, cafes and eateries. Broadway shows, jazz bars, Irish pubs, stylish clubs, galleries, concert venues, and local hang-outs all reside throughout this walk-able thoroughfare. Do as the locals and head to **Cosmos Café**, **Zink American Kitchen**, or **Town** for good company and good eats. In the summer months, warm temperatures and live music beckon young professionals to congregate at "Alive After Five" each Thursday. Throughout the year, crooning street performers, sidewalk vendors, and busy public piazzas are regular fixtures. **EpiCentre**, a new mixed-use retail and entertainment development opening in phases in the coming years, will add approximately 20 new dining and entertainment venues to the district including **Fox Sports Grill**, **Lucky Strike Bowling**, and **BlackFinn Restaurant & Saloon**.



restaurants NIGHTLIFE entertainment

Historic South End, a trolley stop away, couples an assorted mix of restaurants, like **McIntosh's** for fine steaks and seafood and **Pewter Rose** for distinct French bistro flavors. **Greek Isles** offers Mediterranean classics ranging from mousaka to spanakopita, while **Fuel Pizza** and **Southend Brewery & Smokehouse** are where locals turn for good food, brew, and a place to watch the latest sporting event. Meanwhile, for a cosmopolitan night on the town, venture to **Tutto Mondo**, where martinis and champagne can be found in the hands of Charlotte's "who's who." And don't miss South End's many galleries including the **Renee George Gallery** and **Elder Gallery**. These fine local and regional artisans join others for a monthly gallery crawl route in the neighborhood.

Just beyond Center City's financial streets lie many of the Queen City's charming neighborhoods. In between Dilworth's bungalow-style homes and oak-shaded streets are a wide range of local retreats such as **300 East**, **Cantina 1511**, **Bonterra**, and **City Tavern**. In Myers Park, an area with incredible Southern estates, spots like the **Providence Café** offer exceptional meals, especially brunch, in a classic setting. Growing Elizabeth is experiencing a redevelopment, with expected completion in 2010, that has breathed new life into the area with retail and dining. The effects are already showing with spots that have moved in like **NoFo on Liz** and **Loft 1523**, coupled with old favorites such as **Carpe Diem**. Fans of fried pickles regularly seek out **The Penguin** in Plaza-Midwood, also known for the city's "best burger" as rated by the *Charlotte Observer*. Play some ping pong at **Thomas Street Tavern** while enjoying pub food and brew or grab dinner at **Dish** if healthful, organic fare is what peaks your appetite.

The NoDa neighborhood, Soho's little sister and Charlotte's historic arts district located in North Charlotte's historic mill village two miles from Center City, is home to a funky collection of galleries, performance venues and amazing cuisine. NoDa's the destination for cutting edge restaurants including **Boudreaux's Louisiana Kitchen** with authentic Cajun cooking, **Cabo Fish Taco** with a unique blend of fresh cuisine from coastal Baja Mexico, **Mellow Mushroom**, a Bohemian-inspired pizza eatery, and more.

Charlotte's historical roots in blues, jazz, bluegrass, and folk music converge to create a vibrant music scene that brings in genres from around the globe to area venues. **The Evening Muse**, a listening room, art gallery and café, plays host to live music from national, regional, and local original artists five nights each week. The wide variety of genres has earned it a reputation for avant-garde sounds. Nearby in NoDa, the **Neighborhood Theatre** may feel like someone's attic, but the lofty space offers performers, ranging from funk to alt-rock persuasions, some amazing acoustics. The legendary **Double Door Inn** in Elizabeth helped shape the careers of blues favorites like Stevie Ray Vaughn and Buddy Guy. Not only Charlotte's best place for blues, it also regularly features country, jazz, and even reggae musicians. Also in the heart of Elizabeth is the **Visulite Theatre**. Once a consignment store, visitors can now hear live jazz, bluegrass, rock, salsa, and alternative here on any given night. The new **NC Music Factory** in Center City, modeled after SoHo in NYC and Buckhead in Atlanta, promises to be Charlotte's definitive live music destination in the coming years.

Johnson & Wales University, the world's largest food service educator, brought a new level of culinary strength to Charlotte in 2004, when the campus moved into Charlotte's development concept, Gateway Village, in Center City. Over 2,800 students living and working in the area have certainly brought a flair for flavor to the Queen City. The Art Institute of Charlotte and Central Piedmont Community College are also helping to develop Charlotte's "foodie" identity with state-of-the art programs in the culinary arts.



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