

Birmingham Restaurants: The Cole List

You will eat well during Food Media South (FMS). From breakfast burritos to rib racks, we've curated a compelling Saturday roster of Alabama eats.* On Friday night, after you join us for a couple of bites from Frank Stitt of Highlands Bar & Grill, we hope you'll take the opportunity to explore Birmingham on your own.

To that end, we asked Jennifer V. Cole, a Birmingham resident and an FMS speaker, to compile Friday night dining suggestions. They follow. Her list is not encyclopedic. (By necessity, she has left out lots of favorites, including one of the SFA's haunts, Little Savannah in the Forest Park neighborhood.) Exhaustive coverage wasn't the intent. Instead, her list is wide-ranging, personal, and à la mode.

*Scan the Food Media South schedule and you will see that some of Jennifer's suggestions are already a part of FMS. Little Donkey will serve you breakfast on Saturday morn, Johnny's in Homewood will dish lunch that day, and Post Office Pies will fire pizzas that night.

Enjoy,

Team SFA

The Alabama Biscuit Co.

Gussied up whole-grain biscuits in the Cahaba Heights neighborhood (behind The Summit). Options range from sausage gravy with shitake mushrooms to a biscuit version of an apple stack cake, layered with chai apple butter and vanilla mascarpone cream.

4133 White Oak Drive, Birmingham
alabamabiscuit.com

Bettola

Wood-fired pizzas, house made pastas, inventive vegetables dishes, and a salumi stash worthy of an Italian bride at chef James Lewis's low-lit trattoria in Pepper Place. Try the pan-seared cauliflower with olives, wild foraged garlic confit, Majuelo vinegar, sweet paprika, and honey.
2901 2nd Ave S, Birmingham

Brick & Tin

Mauricio Papapietro's so-called sandwich shop, a modern rustic take on fast casual, with cocktails to boot. This is no deli. Fresh breads (focaccia, potato rolls, pain de mie) take on everything from country ham, apples, and pepper relish to roasted portobellos and walnut pesto.
2901 Cahaba Road, Birmingham
brickandtin.com

Bottega

Frank Stitt's Italian answer to French-inspired Highlands Bar & Grill. The café side, known locally as "Baby Bottega" excels at vegetables, pizzas, pastas, and artful salads. The more formal dining room, directed by chef de cuisine Paul Yeck, showcases Southern bounty with Italian finesse.

2240 Highland Avenue South, Birmingham
bottegarestaurant.com

Bottle & Bone

Newly opened Uptown spot that pays homage to beer, wine, and meat (complete with a robust butchery program that includes a shoppable meat case and hands-on classes). Sandwiches, burgers, and meat boards anchor the weekday menu. At Sunday brunch, look for dishes such as boudin scrambled eggs or pork belly with cheese grits and tomato jam.

2311 Richard Arrington Junior Boulevard North #200, Birmingham
bottleandbone.com

Carrigan's Public House

Pub-inspired cocktail warehouse—seriously, this place is huge. Eric Bennett and his team run the city's proverbial table with well-balanced drinks and cocktails-should-be-fun attitude. The repertoire ranges from pre-Prohibition classics to seasonally-inspired concoctions, such as the Delta (aged rum, black strap rum, demarara sugar, and Laphroaig). And their highbrow pub grub might be the best value in town.

2430 Morris Avenue, Birmingham
carriganspub.com

Chez Fon Fon

Frank Stitt's effortlessly chic French bistro with a *boules* court off the back patio. Every classically inspired dish, from rosy chicken liver mousse to trout amandine to the many-layered coconut cake encased in fresh coconut shavings, arrives pitch-perfect each and every time.

2007 11th Avenue South, Birmingham
fonfonbham.com

The Collins Bar

A narrow sliver of a bar where the cocktail crew congregates under a Birmingham-themed periodic table of the elements. There's no drink menu, but the staff knows what's up. Tell them your base spirit and how you take your tippie (sweet, bitter, herbaceous, etc.), and let them surprise you. Suspenders and fedora not required.

2125 2nd Avenue North, Birmingham
collinsbirmingham.com

Continental Bakery

Turreted, European-style bakeshop in the heart of English Village. Stock up on crusty loaves, flaky croissants, and pillowy brioche, all made fresh daily. If you

want to make an early morning breakfast run on Saturday or Sunday, this is your destination.

1909 Cahaba Road, Mountain Brook
chezlulu.us

El Barrio

Thoughtful interpretations of modern Mexican along downtown's Second Avenue North. A graffiti-style mural anchors the room where Brian Somersshield's team serves grilled chorizo meatloaf, pozole verde, and a citrus-y, tequila-based bloody Mary that drinks like tequila and sangrita in one.

2211 2nd Avenue North, Birmingham
elbarriobirmingham.com

Hot & Hot Fish Club

A showcase of Alabama's bounty—grown, caught, or foraged—by avid sportsman and award-winning chef Chris Hastings. He believes so fiercely in the importance of eating seasonally and responsibly and supporting local producers that he's become an active voice for Gulf fishermen and area farmers. That dedication shines on his ever-changing menu. His newest project, Ovenbird, will open in Birmingham in May.

2180 11th Court South, Birmingham
hotandhotfishclub.com

Johnny's Restaurant

Two words: keftedes and collards. Timothy Hontzas, the latest in a long line of Birmingham's Greek restaurateurs, delivers a farm-fresh take on the meat 'n' three. And lest you doubt, Hontzas has steam table chops: His family founded Niki's West, Alabama's ultimate meat 'n' three with more than 30 veggies on the lineup.

2902 18th Street South, Homewood
johnnyshomewood.com

Little Donkey

Because "burrito." The same folks behind Jim 'N Nick's Bar-B-Q opened this from-scratch Mexican joint where smoked meats reign. Make sure at least one person at your table orders the fried chicken, smeared with arbol chile paste and brined before frying. Douse it with their house-made morita-and-habanero pepper vinegar.

2821 Central Ave., Homewood
thelittledonkey.com

Miss Myra's Pit Bar-B-Q

Pit-fired barbecue chicken with Alabama white sauce—mayo-based barbecue sauce that reigns in northern Alabama—and standout banana pudding at this family-run Cahaba Heights mainstay.

3278 Cahaba Heights Rd, Vestavia Hills

Octane

Pour-over coffee and pastries (sticky buns, cherry nut bars, bacon-cheddar-chive scones) in a mod industrial space with an on-site roaster. At night, the lights dim and the staff switches from barista to bartender, serving drinks such as an old-fashioned with coffee-pecan bitters.

2821 Central Avenue #105, Homewood
octanecoffee.com

Ollie Irene

Chef Chris Newsome's Southern gastropub tucked into a Mountain Brook strip mall. Ollie Irene, named for Chris's grandmother, draws inspiration from the hearty culinary canon of Southern farmers, with an eye on the European pantry.

2713 Culver Road, Mountain Brook
ollieirene.com

Post Office Pies

Thin-crust pizzas blistered by wood fire and beautifully composed salads in a former post office, adjacent to the Avondale Brewing Co. Local boy John Hall returned home after working in NYC kitchens (Momofuku Ssäm Bar, Gramercy Tavern, Per Se) to open what has become the de facto community canteen.

209 41st Street South, Birmingham
postofficepies.com

Red Pearl

Part Asian market, part Chinese restaurant, where the menu's ingredients are so fresh you'll find bullfrogs hopping and fish swimming in tanks at the front of the store. Don't miss the sautéed sweet pea leaves and eggplant in rich garlic sauce.

243 West Valley Avenue, Homewood
superorientalmkt.com

Saw's Soul Kitchen

Tiny spot in the burgeoning Avondale neighborhood where barbecue man Mike Wilson amps up his roster of porky goodness with things like marinated lady peas, sweet tea-brined fried chicken sandwiches, and pork-&-greens (a bed of grits, piled with pulled pork, stewed greens, and vinegar-based barbecue sauce, all crowned with fried onions).

215 41st Street South, Birmingham
sawsbbs.com