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The Lasagna That Led to a Fantastic Filibuster

Things to Which You Should Toast

MAR 8, 2013

IS GREENVILLE THE NEXT BIG FOOD CITY OF THE SOUTH?

By [John Mariani](#) at 12:40pm



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The sushi lobster at Greenville's Red Fin.

With **big cities** like Atlanta, still lacking in Southern soul, and Nashville, finally capitalizing on its musical history, battling it out to be the South's best food city, a smaller, more interesting competition is going on between two smaller South Carolina cities — Charleston and Greenville. Despite the former's gastro-surge and national media hype over the last three years, the latter is quickly gaining on the top spot. Both cities are about the same size and population, but while Charleston has far more antebellum charm, Greenville has been called the number-one "North American City of the Future, 2009," not by a food outlet, but by *The Financial Times'* bimonthly magazine *Foreign Direct Investment*. Thanks to BMW's and Michelin's setting up their North American headquarters in the area, the city enjoys the highest per capita foreign investment in the U.S. It's also home to the International Center for Automotive Research, The Center for Emerging Technologies, Lockheed Martin Aircraft and Logistics Center, 3M, Honeywell, Caterpillar Inc., and General Electric, all of them pouring millions into Greenville's development, charity and the arts. And this morning, as snow and wind **batter the Northeast**, Greenville's clear skies and 60-degree forecast remind us that there is something worth leaving home for once Mother Nature's bluster dies down.



Main Street, Greenville, S.C.

What is really amazing is that within a mile-and-a-half stretch of Main Street, there are now more than 110 restaurants, overwhelmingly locally owned, and excellent. There's a brand-new French bakery, Le Grand Bakery, turning out fine baguettes and croissants. There's Vietnamese at **Pho Noodleville**, Jamaican at **Island Blend Jerk & Grill**, and a slew of sushi restaurants. Among the best of these is **Red Fin**, whose crew is turning out some of the best Nobu-style sushi I've tasted in the South. The place is owned by Matt Wuhrman, who after jumping out of airplanes with the 82nd Airborne and 25 months of duty in Iraq, came back to the U.S. in 2010. He worked in bars and nightclubs before moving to and falling in love with Greenville, and, with an investment partner, opened Red Fin, which has a night scene downstairs and family dining upstairs.



ABOUT EAT LIKE A MAN

This is a food blog for everyone, not just men. Even if you're not a man or you don't eat like one, we welcome you. It's just that there are foods that men love and there are ways that men eat that are just different, and we celebrate that. Every day, you'll find a mix of ideas, interviews, opinions, wisdom, tips, news, and recipes. For everybody. Especially men. And, very often, a drink.

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Soby's, with its high-ceilinged dining room.

As in Charleston, this food revolution has occurred very recently; even five years ago, chain eateries dominated the culinary landscape. A catalyst for change early on was the 15-year-old [Soby's](#) where Chef Shaun C. Garcia made a stand for Southern traditions honed to a casual, fine-dining glow, as in his lobster mac 'n' cheese with truffled Parmesan streusel, and his shrimp and grits with Low Country ham and creamy wine sauce.



Devereaux's

[Devereaux's](#), owned by the same 301 Restaurant Group that owns Soby's, is located in the historic American Cigar Factory, packed nightly with an upscale crowd that comes for contemporary American cuisine by Chef Spencer Thompson, like grilled beef deckle with Brussels sprouts and bacon lardons, and "deconstructed s'mores," made with smoked chocolate that evoke a campfire. His "Ultimate Menu" at \$120 features ten "spontaneous courses," and the wine list is more than 200 labels strong.



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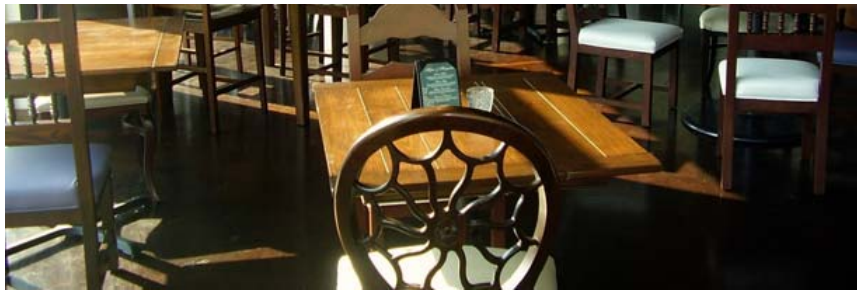
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The Lazy Goat

Victoria Ann Moore — whom Esquire three years ago named a "Chef to Keep Your Eye On" — is one of the true innovators here. She is the executive chef at [The Lazy Goat](#), where she brought into the city a wide array of Mediterranean flavors and ideas, from fine charcuterie of Jamón Serrano Ibérico, Italian salami, and Spanish country cheeses to dishes like succulent braised pork belly with cannellini bean cassoulet and *papas bravas* potatoes with fire onions, *chorizo*, and saffron aioli.



Nose Dive

The historic [Westin Poinsett Hotel](#) (where George Clooney filmed parts of *Leatherheads* and where every Greenville girl dreams of having her wedding reception) has a new gastro-pub called [Nose Dive](#), where Chef Joey Pearson does a sensationally good housemade pretzel lavished with devilled crab and white cheddar that goes well with the array of beers like RJ Rockers Bell Ringer Ale made in Spartanburg, S.C., and Thomas Creek River Falls red made right in town.



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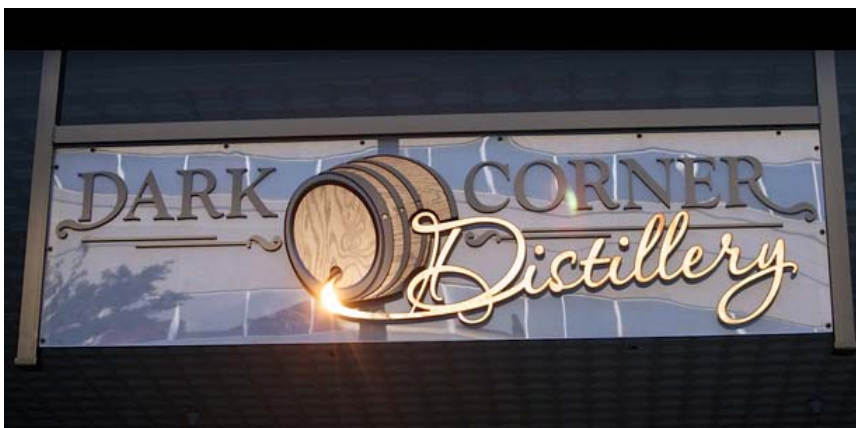
The Green Room

For brunch — go early, the place has a line out the door by 11 a.m. — hit [The Green Room](#) for the cilantro-lime remoulade-laced crab cakes, and don't miss the signature meatloaf that never goes off the menu.



Roost, the city's newest spot.

The city's newest hotspot is [Roost](#) on Main Street, a very handsome, expansive restaurant with the sleek Roost Bar, and an open kitchen manned by Chef Trevor Higgins and a wall of hanging country hams. Just about everything is as locally sourced as possible, from lettuce to pigs, from mustards to grits, and it tastes that way in dishes like the yard bird with biscuit dumplings, the steamed buns with bratwurst and housemade kimchi, and the round iron steak with kale and garlic.



Dark Corner Distillery

One of the happiest and most popular openings in town is Joe Fenten's [Dark Corner Distillery](#), which makes — unabashedly — handcrafted moonshine right on the Main Street premises, as well as various other spirits. You can do a tasting there of bottlings named things like Cock Lightning (a whiskey), Hot Mama (cinnamon and chipotle pepper whiskey),

Honeysuckle Shine (a honeysuckle whiskey), Green Villain (their absinthe), and, simply, Moonshine (their moonshine corn whiskey). The distillery shares its name with Glassy Mountain Township, known for two centuries as Dark Corner, and famous for its moonshine culture.

Their small-batch bourbon has been sold out for months now, with another batch along any year now, we hope.

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