

Eat Your Way to Euphoria

A charming South Carolina town offers an unforgettable culinary vacation. *By Carla Jean Whitley*



Cooking demonstrations



Left: Downtown Greenville
Below: A Euphoria wine dinner



Greenville, S.C.'s downtown is a visitor's dream—and that's never more evident than during Euphoria, the city's annual wine, food and music festival. The festival celebrates its fifth anniversary this year with new events in the city's revitalized downtown. The event is presented by the nonprofit Local Boys Do Good, which directs proceeds into grants for a variety of charities benefiting people in need, education and children's causes. This year's festival takes place Sept. 22 to 25.

Park at your hotel (both the Courtyard Marriott and Westin Poinsett are in the heart of downtown), and you won't need the car again until you leave Greenville. Euphoria events are within walking distance, as are coffee shops, boutiques, art galleries and the Peace Performing Arts Center, which draws national theater and music talent throughout the year.

DETAILS

Euphoria

Sept. 22-25
Greenville, S.C.
Ticket prices vary
euphoria
greenville.com

Euphoria kicks off Thursday with Mosey Down Main, featuring weekend-long deals at participating downtown

businesses. The volume is turned up during the evening's Songwriter's Recipe. Each year Euphoria cofounder and Greenville native Edwin McCain invites several musician friends to join him in talking about the songwriting process and, of course, performing a few of those songs. This year's guests are Maia Sharp and Will Hoge.

The music continues as the eating begins at Friday night's Taste of the South, an outdoor event held in Falls Park along the Reedy River. Come hungry—it's hard to make it through the tents of food without stuffing yourself. Local chefs fill the party, and you'll quickly fall for this town's culinary scene. (Perhaps even more exciting is leaving the party and realizing that most of those restaurants are within walking distance.) Pick up as many plates as you can juggle, a glass of wine or beer, and then find a patch of grass in front of the amphitheater stage.

Get some rest before Saturday's events,

which are a marathon of dining and drinking. When you sit down at a tasting showcase cooking demonstration, you'll be glad to know the chef and Euphoria volunteers will pass samples after the chef leaves the stage. Breezes waft the aroma of the chef's dish toward the audience. It's like being on the set of your favorite food TV show, without the competition but with all the scents of a delicious meal. Chefs don't only go through the motions of preparing a meal; they also share tips and tools of the trade. (Many vendors selling those tools are on hand as festival sponsors.)

If table after table lined with bottles of wine is your idea of heaven, then the afternoon's Grand Tasting may be a glimpse of the afterlife. Vendors from across the area offer samples of wines from around the world, and a selection of bottles are available for purchase on site. Though each vendor can tell you where you'll find the wine locally, a number are also able to offer information on where those wines are available in Birmingham. If you can pull yourself away from the tasting tables, pop into the wine seminars, taught by some of the country's top sommeliers. And this year, Euphoria also introduces a beer garden, featuring brews from across the Southeast region.

Beer lovers will also find a place at the table during a Saturday night beer dinner, and six wine dinners and a spirits dinner will take place simultaneously at restaurants around town. Peruse the menus and buy a ticket quickly—these popular events frequently sell out. During Euphoria, chefs from some of the nation's best restaurants join Greenville's favorites for six-course meals, paired with beverages. Past guest chefs include Hot and Hot Fish Club's Chris Hastings and Highlands Bar and Grill's Frank Stitt, plus other James Beard award winners from New York, South Carolina and elsewhere.

End the weekend with cook offs, a laid-back Sunday morning jazz brunch, again featuring Greenville's top chefs, and 2011's final new event, the Sunday Supper. Then begin planning your next trip, because for all its culinary glory, Euphoria is just a first taste of all this charming city offers. ●

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Falls Park



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