

Southern Living®

HAPPY FALL!

87 Ways to Get in the Spirit

**7 Great
Pumpkin
Recipes**

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**THE
SOUTH'S
10 BEST
BBQ
JOINTS**

**GEORGIA'S
COOLEST
MOUNTAIN
TOWN**

OCTOBER 2018



Rodney Scott in
the pit at Scott's
Bar-B-Que



OFF THE EATEN PATH

The New BBQ Bucket List

From back roads to interstates, these are the South's standouts

BY ROBERT MOSS

Every year, Southern barbecue gets better, so naming the top spots gets harder. For 2018, I hit the road, visited contenders, and weighed the overall experience: meat, sauce, sides, and atmosphere. These 10 are the best.

1

Scott's Bar-B-Que

Hemingway, South Carolina

Since the early 1970s, the Scott family has been cooking classic Pee Dee-style,

whole-hog barbecue and selling it for takeout at their country store. Ella and Roosevelt Scott's son, Rodney, who has risen to national prominence for his mastery of the pit, recently opened up his own restaurant in Charleston, but his parents—with the help of Rodney's son Dominic—have kept things going in Hemingway. A vertically integrated operation, it starts with wood they cut down themselves, which is seasoned and then reduced to embers in a giant burn barrel behind the metal-walled

pit house. The coals are carried by the shovelful into the pit room and then scattered beneath whole hogs cooking skin up on the cinder block pits. After about 12 hours, they're flipped over and mopped with a pepper-laced vinegar sauce. Is it the big burn barrels, the old-school pits, or just something in the Hemingway air? Who knows? But Scott's pulled pork is magical.

2

Louie Mueller Barbecue

Taylor, Texas

Central Texas is famous for its old-fashioned meat markets selling smoked selections, and Louie Mueller Barbecue represents that iconic style best. You step inside a 118-year-old building with



worn wooden floors, mismatched tables and chairs, and a haze of post oak smoke hanging thick in the air: The meats are pulled from the warming pit and sliced to order. Each customer gets a sample of brisket to tide them over till their tray arrives. Now operated by Louie's grandson Wayne, Mueller's has long been heralded for its brisket, made from marbled prime-grade beef and encrusted in black pepper. But the real prize in our book goes to the beef ribs: massive slabs of smoky meat with built-in bone handles.

3

Skylight Inn BBQ

Ayden, North Carolina

In the 1980s, the Jones family erected a silver-painted wooden dome on top of the restaurant, because many believed that it was the barbecue capital of the world. Not much else has changed at Skylight Inn since this icon opened in 1947. They still cook whole hogs all night on open brick pits fired with shovelfuls of oak coals. The finished meat is then seasoned with salt, cider

vinegar, and Texas Pete as it's chopped into shreds on a giant wooden block. Small bits of skin, crisp from the hours on the pit, are chopped right in, adding a little extra crunch to each smoky bite. It's a cash-only, order-at-the-counter operation, and the only accompaniments to the pork are coleslaw and a square of cornbread.

4

Snow's BBQ

Lexington, Texas

The pits at Snow's are overseen by Tootsie Tomanetz, one of Texas' legendary pitmasters. Though she's now well into her eighties, she still arrives at 2 a.m. to shovel coals and mop the ribs and chickens straight through till opening. More barbecue compound than restaurant, Snow's has a pair of small, red, wood-sided buildings with rusted metal roofs. Beside them stands a tall, open shed, where diners can enjoy their barbecue just a few feet from where Tomanetz does her work. The products from those pits are remarkable: sausage with a great snap to the casing and firm ground meat inside as well as brisket tinged almost purple from the smoke and studded with sweet triangles of fat. But here in the heart of cow country, the real wonders on the menu are the chicken and pork. Six bucks can buy a half chicken with

pepper-laced skin and juicy meat inside. Or order the Pork Shoulder Steak, with a concentrated dose of smoke in its mahogany bark—it's out of this world. Snow's operates just one day a week (on Saturday), opening at 8 a.m. A line starts to form outside about an hour before that, but this is one Texas joint that's worth every minute of the wait.

5

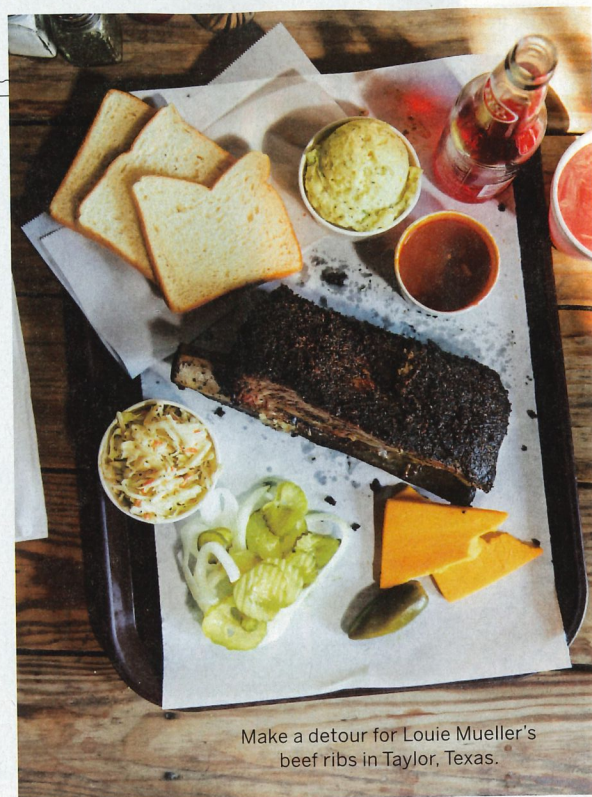
Allen & Son Barbeque

Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Located just north of Chapel Hill, Allen & Son straddles the boundary between North Carolina's two famous regional styles, so barbecue fans can taste the best of both. Owner Keith Allen does everything the old-fashioned way. He cooks pork shoulders over hickory coals in closed brick pits (following the Piedmont method), but he serves the meat with a spicy, tomato-free vinegar sauce and a white, mayo-based slaw (hallmarks of the Eastern style). Don't miss the whiteboard with a list of the daily made-from-scratch desserts.



Sam Jones
smoking on
an open pit at
Skylight Inn



Make a detour for Louie Mueller's
beef ribs in Taylor, Texas.



6

Fresh Air Bar-B-Que

Jackson, Georgia

Anyone who asserts that Georgia doesn't have a distinctive barbecue style needs to pay a visit to Fresh Air. The original location in Jackson was founded in 1929, and these folks don't mess around with their pork, ribs, or even chicken. At Fresh Air, barbecue means chopped pork that's dressed in a thin, spicy red sauce, which you can get on a sandwich or on a barbecue plate with Brunswick stew and bread. The pork—all hams, not shoulders—is cooked in the center of the restaurant in a big, L-shaped brick pit.

7

Franklin Barbecue

Austin, Texas

Aaron Franklin is a barbecue celebrity—he's the author of a best-selling cookbook, the first pitmaster to win a James Beard Award for best chef in his region, and the star of a TV show. Waiting in

line for three hours at Franklin is just something people do when they visit Austin, even if they aren't barbecue fans. The restaurant's prime-grade brisket is flawless, as are the pork ribs and meaty sausage, with just the right snap to the casing. Arrive early with a cooler of beer and a comfy folding chair—it's a long wait, but you'll taste what all the fuss is about.

8

Lexington Barbecue

Lexington, North Carolina

Perched atop a hill just outside the downtown proper, the white, barnlike building has had numerous additions since founder Wayne Monk opened it in 1962, but little has changed on the barbecue front. Pork shoulders are cooked for 10 hours on closed brick pits, kindled by hickory and oak coals rendered down from logs in separate fireboxes. The hot coals are scattered underneath the cooking meat, and this direct-heat method imbues the pork with the subtle, smoky, Lexington-

style flavor. It's served chopped, sliced, or "coarse chopped" (cut into chunks) and dressed with what the locals refer to as "dip"—the region's signature sauce. It's vinegar based and tinged red with ketchup, adding the perfect accent to a tray of chopped pork with slaw and hush puppies on the side.

9

Lewis Barbecue

Charleston, South Carolina

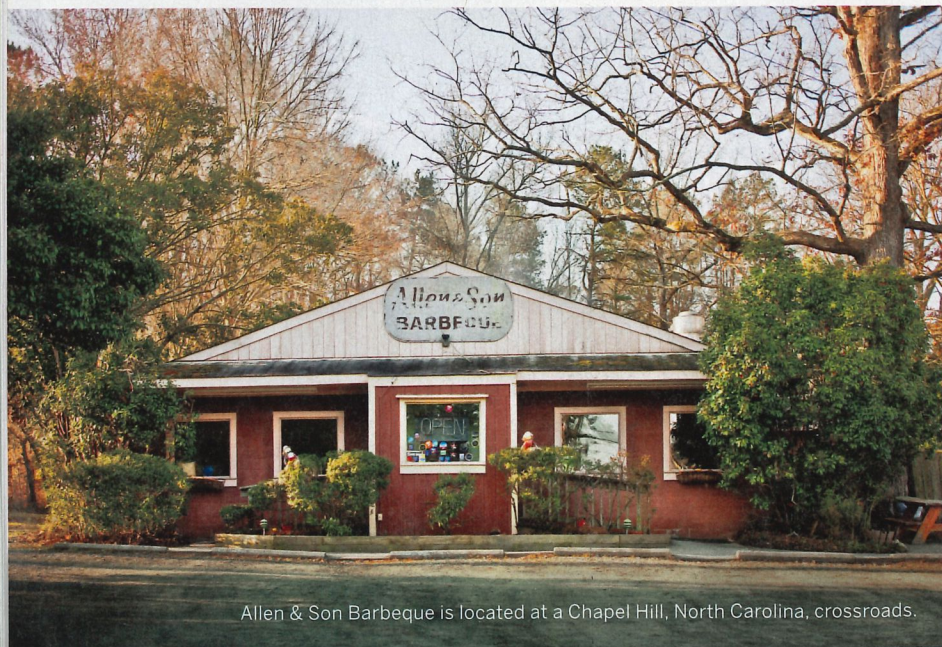
Back in 2016, Texas brisket master John Lewis created plenty of buzz when he pulled up stakes and headed east to open a barbecue restaurant in Charleston. Lewis honed his skills at Franklin Barbecue and La Barbecue in Austin, Texas, and his menu stays true to that region's style—brisket, ribs, turkey, and house-made "hot guts" sausage, all sliced fresh to order and served on butcher paper-lined trays with onions and pickles on the side. There's one element of Texas barbecue you won't find here: a long line. Lewis makes sure it moves fast and that they don't sell out before closing time.

10

Martin's Bar-B-Que Joint

Nolensville, Tennessee

Pat Martin opened his first restaurant, just south of Nashville, in 2006 and now has five Tennessee locations and one in Louisville, Kentucky. At all six, they cook whole hogs on open brick pits, and the pork pulled from those hogs is among the best. Order it on a sandwich topped with coleslaw (the proper West Tennessee way) or on a barbecue tray, but for your money, it's worth going for the signature Redneck Taco. Long strands of pulled pork are piled atop a cornmeal hoecake and loaded up with coleslaw and a sweet, tangy sauce—a modern homage to the old West Tennessee style. **SL**



Allen & Son Barbeque is located at a Chapel Hill, North Carolina, crossroads.