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Asheville's culinary scene is drawing inspiration from its Appalachian roots.

Written by Michelle Boudin



The Foundry Hotel

Asheville has long been known as the perfect weekend getaway for Carolinians looking to escape the heat and take in some cool(er) mountain air. But now, more than ever, this popular mountain town has so much more to offer, especially when it comes to its food scene. For Asheville, it's about getting back to its roots, which means drawing inspiration, techniques, and ingredients from the Appalachians. From James Beard–nominated chefs to notable new restaurants with can't-miss dishes steeped in deep Southern history, there's an abundance of new offerings appearing every month in Asheville's emerging modern Appalachian culinary scene.

Here's a look at how the Appalachian-inspired culinary scene is unfolding in Asheville and why you need to take advantage of it now.



District 42
in Hotel Arras

COURTESY OF THE FOUNDRY HOTEL AND HOTEL ARRAS

EAT

Chow Chow

This fall, from September 12 to 15, Asheville will play host to the inaugural Chow Chow, a brand-new food festival bringing together chefs, farmers, and other producers who are the foundation of the region's growing culinary identity. It will take place in downtown Asheville and has some big names behind it—including James Beard–award winners Meherwan Irani and Katie Button—and it will feature more than two dozen signature events.

Cider Fest

For the seventh year, on October 12, Cider Fest will take place along the French Broad River, not far from downtown. There will be nearly one hundred different varieties represented from two dozen makers of cider, mead, apple wine, and apple spirits, all paying homage to the long history of craft beverages in the Appalachian region.

Button & Co. Bagels

Because locally grown flour is flavorful but typically only used for biscuits, Button, a James Beard finalist and owner of Asheville's famed Cúrate restaurant, got creative with her recipe and mixed the locally grown flour with flour from the North to

give the bagel the right, doughy texture. Button also uses sorghum syrup, made from a Carolina-grown grass, to help sweeten the dough.

The Greenhouse

It's a family affair at The Greenhouse, a new bar and modern-American restaurant that will highlight apples in a fun and flavorful way. The concept will feature craft cocktails made with locally produced cider,

a charcoal oven that uses wood from surrounding orchards, and a menu highlighting local beef fed with apple mash left over from the cider-making process.

Benne on Eagle

When five-time James Beard–semifinalist chef John Flear went to work on his newest venture, an Appalachian-inspired soul food restaurant, he wanted to incorporate the oft-overlooked culinary contributions of African Americans. So he went into The Block, the historic African-American neighborhood, where he built Benne on Eagle and recruited recipes and talent such as Hanan Shabazz to help craft the menu. Seventy-year-old Shabazz, who once owned her own soul food restaurant, whips up can't-miss fish cakes, bread, and more for the restaurant.



Chef Katie Button



Benne on Eagle

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BENNE ON EAGLE



This is Southern comfort food with a twist! Come hungry and make sure to try the Potlikker Braised Chicken Wings, Braised Rabbit, Fried Catfish and Waffles, and Hot Water Cornbread.

BUTTON & CO. BAGELS

Don't miss the egg and cheese with Benton's Country Ham bagel sandwich. Or grab a plain bagel and make sure to smother it in chef Katie Button's house-made pecan butter.



COURTESY OF EVAN SUNG PHOTOGRAPHY

STAY

The Foundry Hotel

This former twentieth-century steel foundry (it once made the steel that was used to build much of Asheville and the nearby Biltmore Estate) was restored in 2018, resulting in a charming, upscale boutique hotel. In keeping with its original early-1900s architecture, the restoration maintained details such as the original brick and hardwood floors, as well as the original pulley elevator, exposed beams, steel-star fastenings, and industrial-style windows. The guest rooms are an eclectic mix of new and old with exposed brick and framed pictures and artifacts from the Appalachian Mountains.

Hotel Arras

Asheville's famed Art Deco skyline got a new icon and four-star luxury property when Hotel Arras opened this summer in the heart of downtown. The 128-room hotel is filled with local artwork and an effortlessly luxurious and comfortable aesthetic for which the Kimpton brand



Workshop Lounge at The Foundry Hotel

Asheville arts community, even offering guests private art tours throughout the hotel.

Guests can choose from two on-site restaurants run by the local husband and wife duo who own Posana, also in downtown Asheville. Expect family-style Mediterranean cuisine at Bargello. Or grab a seat at the counter and watch as wood-fired gourmet pizzas are pulled from the scorching hot oven. District 42 takes a different approach to food with small bites complemented by

is known. Named for a region in France famous for its woven fabrics, Hotel Arras captures the essence of the eclectic

hand-crafted cocktails that are a nod to old Asheville.

DO

See the Biltmore in a new way by exploring George Vanderbilt's farming legacy on the estate's Segway Tour. If that's not your thing, you can also enjoy English tea service, check out America's most-visited winery, or eat at one of the Biltmore's many restaurants where they serve their own pasture-raised meats and produce.



SHOP

Bette

Two girlfriends opened this shop that carries something for "every Bette." (The store got its moniker from the old-time name that refers to an attractive, stylish, and self-confident woman.) Bette has everything from basic jeans and fun tees to cocktail dresses. Make sure to snag Hazelwood Soap Company's bestselling beach-scented soaps and candles created just for Bette.

Nest Boutique and DIY Studio

This fun clothing and crafts store is full of affordable, trendy clothes, accessories, home decor, and gifts for all the fun girls in your life. They also offer regular DIY classes.



Porter & Prince

Porter & Prince

Recently voted the Most Beautiful Independently Owned Store in North Carolina by *Architectural Digest*, this charming shop is filled with curated home furnishings, fine linens, and unique luxury gifts. Porter & Prince has been an Asheville staple for more than two decades. While you're there, scoop up French Milled Shea Butter soaps, satin loungewear, and silk linens.