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southerncomfort

Chefs in the land of corn bread and jambalaya are experimenting with new flavors and preparations—and that's a good thing. BY JJ GOODE • PHOTOGRAPHS BY JULIANA SOHN



ern flavors like an old hand, turning country-ham bones into an intense jus that he serves with striped bass and concocting the perfect she-crab soup capped with parsnip froth. His youthful exuberance shines through, though, especially in his seared duck breast over red beans that have been spiked with molasses, bacon, and OJ—a cross between duck à l'orange and pork and beans.

55 South Market St., 843-534-2155; [tristandining.com](http://tristandining.com)

#### FIG

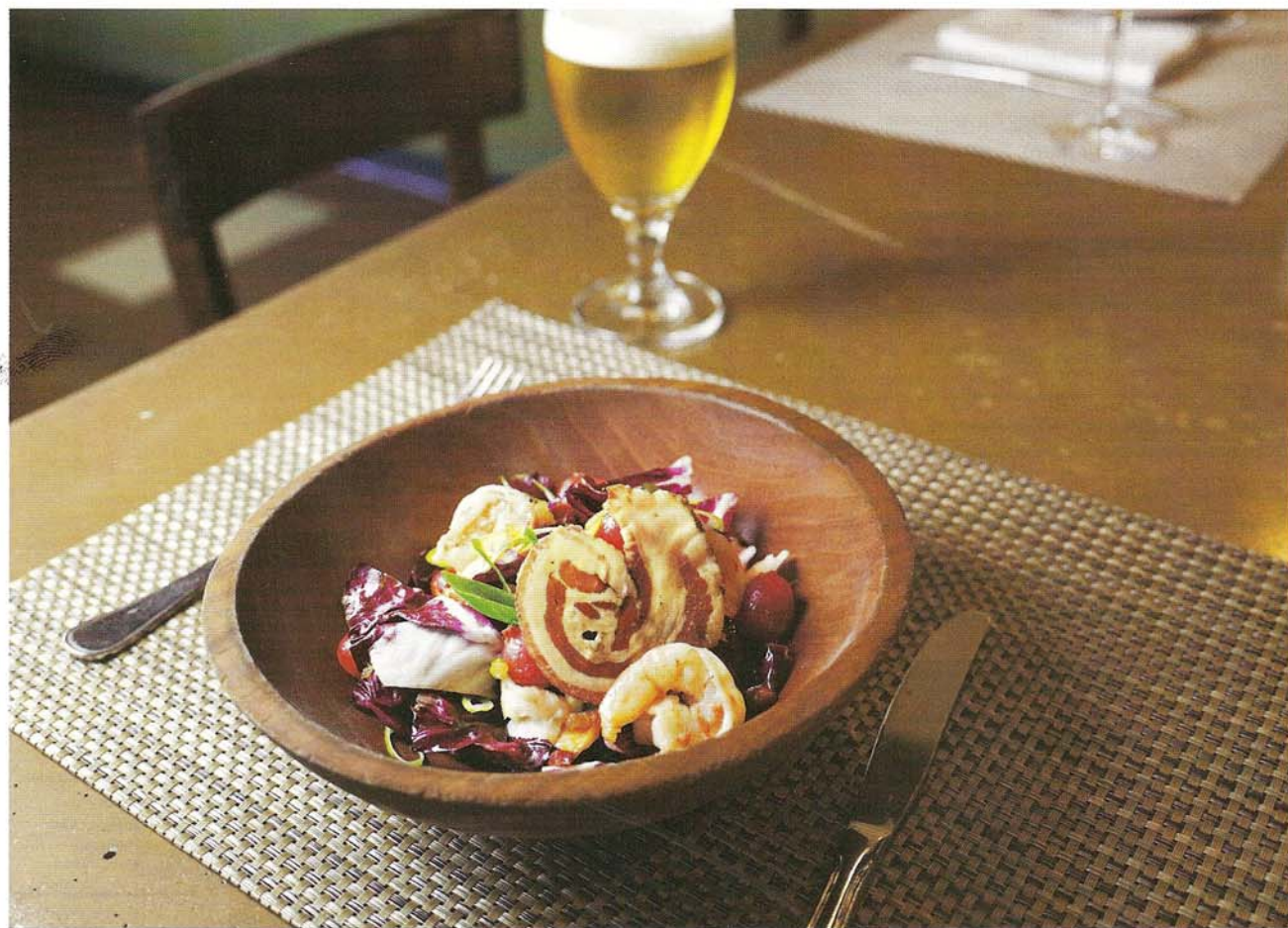
You could call Michael Lata, leader of Charleston's culinary awakening, a professional shopper: His menu at FIG is a roll call of the area's best produce and proteins. But his cleverness in the kitchen takes the ingredients to the next level, bringing together wild shrimp and radicchio delicately wilted in a warm pancetta dressing and contrasting the meaty-yet-flaky texture of grouper with

smooth mashed potatoes. Even Lata's richest dish, fried pig's feet with creamed corn, doesn't feel biscuits-and-gravy heavy.

232 Meeting St., 843-805-5900; [eatatfig.com](http://eatatfig.com)

#### CLASSIC: MAGNOLIA'S

Nearly 20 years ago, Donald Barickman made the humble, seafood-focused Low Country fare seem worthy of a white tablecloth, and his food is still impressive. Plump crab cakes



## Hold the Accent

If you can't make it to Dixie, don't despair. These northern outposts of southern cuisine have a way with grits and boiled peanuts.

#### CHICAGO

Table Fifty-Two

At this 36-seat former carriage house, Art Smith, Oprah's onetime personal chef, makes perfect renditions of crab cakes (with peanut-and-fennel slaw) and delicate shrimp and grits that do his southern roots proud. 52 W. Elm St., 312-573-4000; [tablefifty-two.com](http://tablefifty-two.com)

#### CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

Hungry Mother

Barry Maiden honed his chops in Boston, but he fell in love with cooking back in Marion, Virginia. As a result, his menu plays up his birthplace's cuisine, like roasted chicken with redevye-gravy jus. 233 Cardinal Medeiros Ave., 617-499-0090; [hungrymothercambridge.com](http://hungrymothercambridge.com)

#### SAN FRANCISCO

Farmer Brown

Jay Foster combines his adopted city's fetish for carefully sourced ingredients with southern instincts and produces dishes—like pulled-pork sandwiches and cornmeal-battered catfish—that would impress picky Mississippians. 25 Mason St., 415-409-3276; [farmerbrownssf.com](http://farmerbrownssf.com)

#### WASHINGTON, D.C.

Acadiana

At his upscale shrine to Louisiana food, Jeff Tunks focuses on the region's beloved ingredients, glazing duck with pepper jelly and cane syrup and packing the big flavors of jambalaya into a risotto that he serves with redbfish. 901 New York Ave. NW, 202-408-8848; [acadianarestaurant.com](http://acadianarestaurant.com)

#### PORTLAND, OREGON

The Country Cat

Aside from his masterly skillet-fried chicken, Adam Sappington tends to avoid standard southern dishes, choosing instead to remix twangy tastes by serving pork belly, chop, and shoulder over creamy grits. 7937 SE Stark St., 503-408-1414; [thecountrycat.net](http://thecountrycat.net)

#### NEW YORK CITY

The Redhead

Any chef who cooks shrimp and grits this good has a solid command of down-home food. But the fact that Meg Grace has the vision to spike peanut brittle with bacon proves she's got a southern soul, too. 349 E. 13th St., 212-533-6212; [theredheadnyc.com](http://theredheadnyc.com)