

POINTS NORTH *atlanta*

WELCOME BACK TO BOOMTOWN

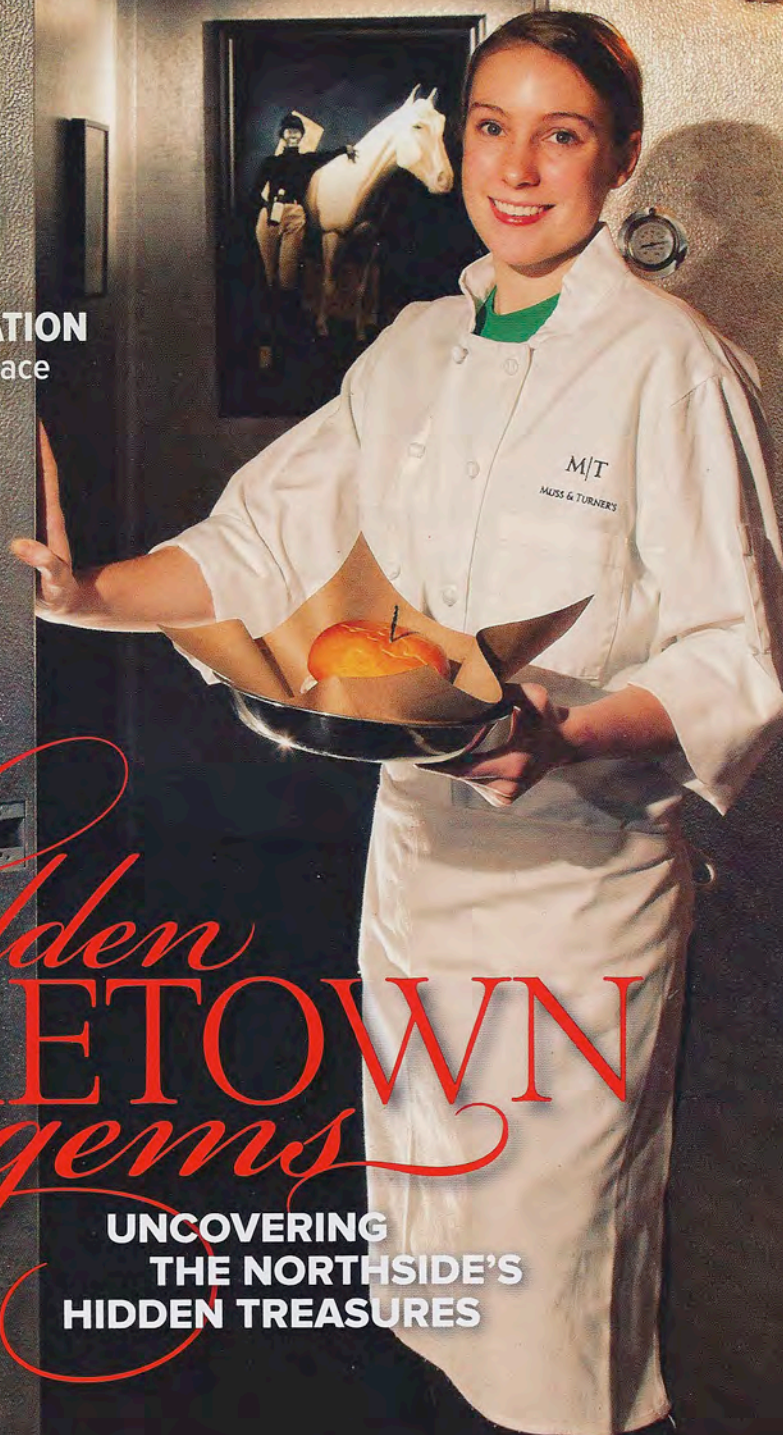
Are Local Home Sales
Rebounding?

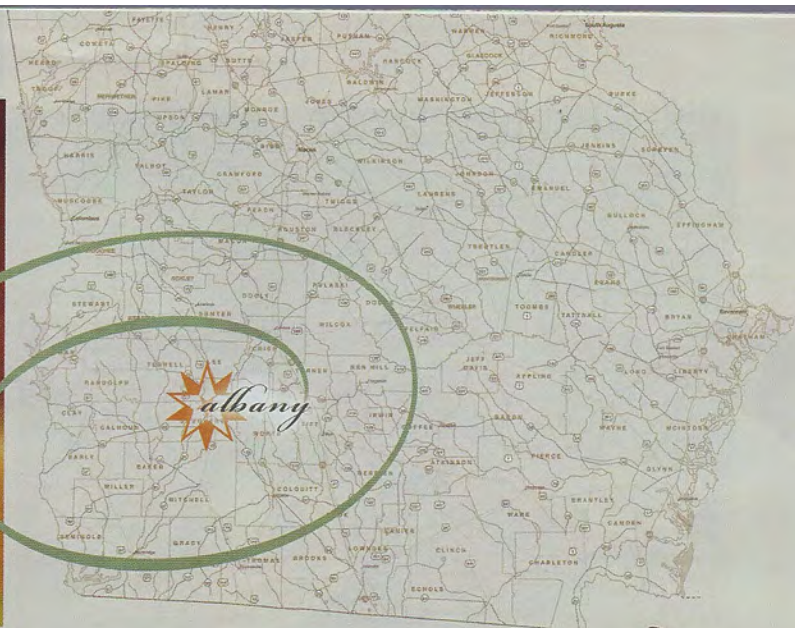
INTERIOR INSPIRATION

Enliven Your Living Space

hidden HOMETOWN *gems*

UNCOVERING
THE NORTHSIDE'S
HIDDEN TREASURES





home AGAIN

A SOUTHERN BOY REDISCOVERS
HIS TASTE BUDS IN **ALBANY, GA.**

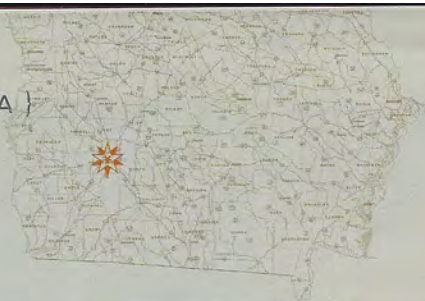
{ WRITTEN BY GLENN KAUFMANN }

GROWING UP IN GEORGIA, you think of Atlanta as the center of the southern food universe. Part of that is youth, and the rest is our own sense of place. Older now, better traveled, and with a much improved (I hope) palate, I've found a place not far from home that soothes those youthful cravings for Southern cooking, and satisfies the best parts of my adult tastes. In short, Albany and a few of the surrounding communities offer a surprisingly diverse mix of upscale dining, quality locally produced products, and a healthy (and sometimes not so healthy) dose of down-home, Southern fare.

Tucked into the southwest corner of the state, just three hours from Atlanta, Albany is close enough for a gourmet weekend foray, but far enough to make it a real getaway. As the birthplace of Ray Charles and the childhood home of food maven Paula Deen, Albany's stature in Southern musical and culinary circles is secure. And for visitors, the surrounding countryside is home to a host of quality providers and artisan purveyors. Finally, with the Gulf Coast just a couple of hours away, daily fresh-off-the-boat seafood deliveries make their way to Albany and environs without the air cargo hassle or pricing.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ISTOCK

{ ALBANY, GA }



Clockwise from top left: Breakfast at Aunt Fannie's; Pearly's famous country cooking; Riverfront BBQ; Henry Campbell's french onion soup; Elements Coffee Co.

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PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ALBANY CVB AND VENDORS

Tourism with Your Taste Buds

From that first locally roasted morning cup of coffee, Albany serves up great food and drink in a wide variety of styles and atmospheres. For those who prefer to start their mornings on the lighter side, Elements Coffee Co. serves an excellent cuppa, breakfast sandwiches, bagels and simply divine baked goods.

But the best dining days begin with a good breakfast, and Albany takes breakfast seriously. There are two standouts for

the classic down-home breakfast. Aunt Fannie's Checkered Apron delivers a top notch, but "no frills" breakfast. The coffee may come in Styrofoam cups, but the biscuits are tender, the grits sublime, and the gravy answers to a higher power: somebody's grandma (or Aunt Fannie).

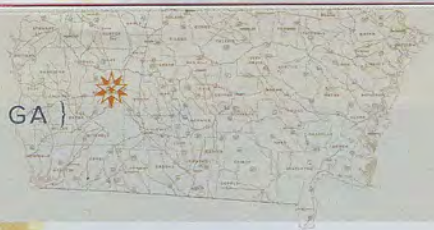
Across town, Pearly's offers a similar diner experience. Here, the omelets are divine, and the house "breakfast in a cup"

(choice of meat with eggs, grits and cheese), and salmon croquettes kick start the day with a clever, unexpected local touch. Both Pearly's and Aunt Fannie's also offer equally well-regarded lunch and dinner choices, but breakfast is where they really shine and deliver something special.

As your day progresses through Albany's galleries, shops and museums, you're sure to accumulate an appetite and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 50 ➔

{ ALBANY, GA }



White Oak Pastures

a powerful thirst. Fear not, for cold sweet tea and a sumptuous lunch are never far off in these parts. If lunchtime finds you in downtown Albany, the pork, beef and sides at Riverfront BBQ are everything you could hope for in a South Georgia barbecue joint. There are sauces that range from sweet to nuclear, meat that melts in your mouth, and a large open room that is an open invitation to meet the locals who flock there.

If all of this eating is making you hunger for a bit of gourmet retail therapy,

White Oak Pastures is dedicated to raising sustainable, hormone-free beef on grassland that is free of chemical fertilizers.

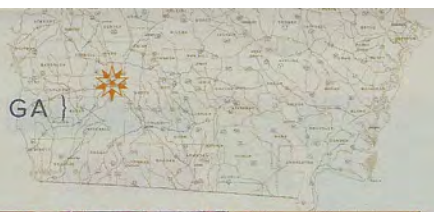
PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ALBANY CVB AND VENDORS

Tommy Mc's offers a luscious assortment of locally sourced fruit and vegetables, and a store filled with edible eye candy.

Later, after you've ticked all the boxes on your gourmet gift list, the true taste of Albany reaches its zenith at Henry Campbell's Steakhouse amidst a soul-coddling,

multi-course dinner extravaganza. A typical Henry Campbell's experience begins with a salad of spinach, strawberries, toasted Cromartie pecans, red onions, blue cheese and red wine vinaigrette. The meal then moves forward to a 16-ounce, bone-in Kansas City Strip with sides such as tender

CONTINUED ON PAGE 52 ➔



Above: Wine at Still Pond Vineyard
Top right: Sweet Grass Dairy cheese
Bottom right: Jonah's Fish and Grits

Sweet Grass Dairy produces a range of excellent cow's milk cheeses using sustainable rotational grazing methods that are good for both the animals and the pastures.

sautéed asparagus, classic creamed spinach, or their incomparable white cheddar/truffle macaroni and cheese. Vegetarians might choose a divine risotto, sea bass or any one of a number of other entrées that are more than just an obligatory nod to meatless alternatives. For fans of the grape, the knowledgeable Henry Campbell's staff will happily suggest bottles from the extensive house cellar.

If you prefer something a bit less extravagant, consider taking advantage of Albany's proximity to the Gulf Coast. The Catch combines Southern favorites (Creole

grouper, shrimp and grits) with inventive coastal fare (wasabi tuna, brown sugar salmon) leveraging Albany's longstanding relations with regional fisherman in an upscale oyster bar setting. It may look like flip flops are optional, but it tastes like you've snuck past the velvet rope.

Around Albany

Further testament to the southwest Georgia

food scene's commitment to freshness, a host of regional craftsman have made great strides in providing the area with quality, small-batch, locally sourced meats, wines and cheeses. For traveling gourmands, any visit to Albany and southwest Georgia must include a brief foray through the surrounding countryside. Here again, a full day's worth of attractions awaits the adventurous foodie.

WINE PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ALBANY CVB AND VENDORS; CHEESE PHOTO AND FISH AND GRITS PHOTO COURTESY OF GLENN KAUFMANN

Albany Tidbits: A LIST OF FUN (NON-FOOD) ATTRACTIONS



Chehaw

An 800-acre nature park with a 100-acre AZA-accredited zoo where the animals (including alligators, rhinos and cheetah) are not caged in but free to roam in larger areas. parksatchehaw.org



Radium Springs Gardens

An oasis of wildlife in the heart of Albany, Radium Springs deposits 70,000 gallons of clear, 68-degree water per minute from an underground cave. The park features a restored terrace, a casino garden with indigenous and exotic flora and gazebos.

Flint RiverQuarium & Imagination Theater

This 175,000-gallon tank, open-air Blue Hole spring has hundreds of different aquatic species and an aviary with species indigenous to the area. flintriverquarium.com

Albany Civil Rights Institute

Located next to Mt. Zion Church, where Dr. Martin Luther King spoke during the Civil Rights Movement, this museum tells the story as it unfolded here in Albany during the Movement. albanycivilrightsinstitute.org

Albany Museum of Art

Home to an ever-growing African, European and American art collections and one of the most impressive collections of sub-Saharan African art in the southeastern United States. albanymuseum.com

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About an hour west of Albany in the town of Bluffton, beef evangelist Will Harris and his family raise their cattle on a uniquely certified organic family farm that dates back to 1866. White Oak Pastures (open to visitors seven days a week) is dedicated to raising sustainable, hormone-free beef on grassland that is free of chemical fertilizers. White Oak's beef (and poultry) are tender, succulent, divine and all grown and processed completely onsite under the family's watchful eye. Within easy driving distance of Albany, White Oak Pastures is a must-see for gourmands, foodies and anyone interested in sustainability and green ventures. I was lucky enough to meet Harris and sample White Oak's beef at a wine tasting at Still Pond Vineyard, a delightful family vineyard and winery about 30 minutes away in the town of Arlington.

The Still Pond tasting room is open to the public six days a week and offers a wide selection of wine-related gifts, complimentary nibbles and tastings of the winery's selection of muscadine wines. For those not familiar with it, muscadine grows well in hot, humid climates, producing berries that range from bronze to dark purple. Common varieties include Noble, Carlos and Magnolia. Still Pond's wine varietals include the Late Harvest Noble, Crimson Clover, Confederate Peach, a Plantation Red and a Plantation White. Tending toward the sweeter side, the bottles from Still Pond are excellent on a warm evening with a light bite. Then again, their heavier reds pair well with the beef from White Oak Pastures. But of course, where would good wine be without cheese?

Fortunately, just outside of Thomasville, Sweet Grass Dairy produces a range of excellent cow's milk cheeses. They use sustainable rotational grazing methods that are good for both the animals and the

Get Valen-TINY

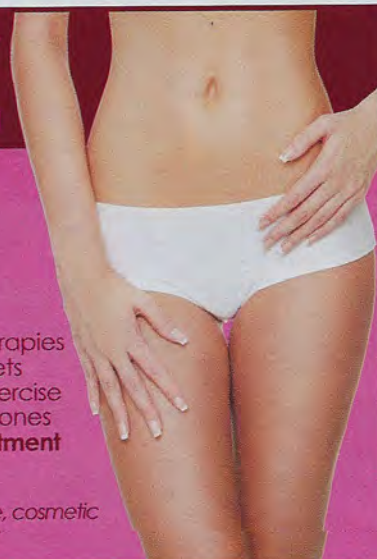
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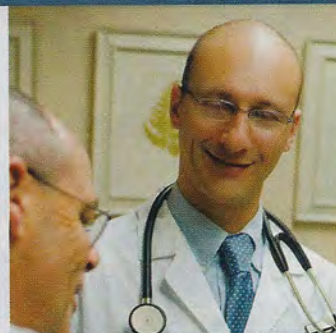
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{ ALBANY, GA }



The plates of southwestern Georgia are piled high with inventive and sustainable dishes that satisfy both body and soul.

pastures. And in addition to their farming operation, Sweet Grass operates a tasting room and store in downtown Thomasville. Here, they stock a range of wines, cheeses, high-end products (dishware, cooking goods, etc.) and friendly, informed staff happy to talk about the Sweet Grass philosophy of eating well.

Whether you make your way to Thomasville in time for lunch or dinner, Jonah's Fish and Grits puts a "must-taste" stamp on the day's exploration. Located just off the downtown corridor in a modest dining room, Jonah's feels like down-home food. And it is just that, if down-home cooking had an adventurous younger brother who always made the tried and true taste fresh and new. Think of bacon-wrapped Diver's sea scallops in a signature house peach-tree chutney, or Gulf Coast grouper with cream sherry in a classic, potato bacon chowder. Jonah's is a genuine local secret surprise. Then again, we've come to expect nothing less than the best from this corner of our state.

From breakfasts and a white table cloth dinner in Albany to excellent regional wines, sustainable family farmed meats and cheeses in the surrounding countryside, the plates of southwestern Georgia are piled high with inventive and sustainable dishes that satisfy both body and soul. **PN**

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