

ESSENCE

THE BLACK WOMAN'S JOURNEY

50th

ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

FIVE DECADES
OF STYLE,
CULTURE &
POWER



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THE NEW NORMAL: HOW COVID-19 SHIFTED OUR REALITY

Culinary Iconoclasts

New school meets old school as emerging Black chefs cook up their own award-winning eateries, joining the legends whose vibrant restaurants are still beloved today

BY DWIGHT BROWN



01

Twisted Soul Cookhouse and Pours (2016)

Atlanta
twisted soul cookhouse and pours.com

Black and LGBTQ+ cultures converge at this ultrahip cookhouse that adds international panache to comfort food. Its worldly chef and owner, Debora Van Trece, uses "creative modern interpretations and global influences on traditional southern soul food to really turn it on its head." Dishes like Fried Green Tomatoes With Crawfish Aioli and Sweet Tea Baby Back Ribs showcase her progressive thinking. "We're supportive of the community," says Van Trece. "When Atlanta was impacted by the government shutdown, we provided free meals to workers and their families."

OUR PICKS: Delight in the Jack Daniels Honey Pecan Wings and Apple Brie Bread Pudding.

02

The Grey (2014)

Savannah
thegreyrestaurant.com

Winner of the 2019 James Beard Foundation Award for Best Chef in the Southeast, Mashama Bailey, along with John O. Morisano, opened the Grey in a former Jim Crow-segregated Greyhound Bus Terminal. "It sat like a relic—same layout since 1938," says Bailey, who notes that the eatery's menu is influenced by southern cuisine and her studies in France. "The regions of Leon and Burgundy have similar dishes to those of the South," she says. "Cassoulet, coq au vin and quenelles remind me of baked beans and chicken and dumplings." Stop by the Diner Bar for a bowl of fish and grits with a cocktail or some wine, or sit in the Main Dining Room for a focused menu with a bigger wine list.

OUR PICKS: Enjoy the Sweet Potato Bisque or Smothered Quail.

03

Sylvia's (1962)

Harlem
sylviasrestaurant.com

With a loan from her mom, who mortgaged their family farm, South Carolinian Sylvia Woods started her famed New York restaurant six decades ago. Today Sylvia's is arguably the most famous soul food restaurant in the city—the cultural institution hosts celebs and politicians alike. The current chef, grandson Marcus Woods, and restaurateur and granddaughter Tren'ness Woods-Black remember their grandmother's basic philosophy for menu items: Stick to soul food's origins, using everything you would find on a farm. "Coming to Sylvia's is like coming home," Woods-Black says. "You trust that the food will taste just as good as it did yesterday or 20 years ago."

OUR PICKS: Savor the Catfish Fingers, Fried Chicken or BBQ Ribs plus Peach Cobbler.

04

Dooky Chase's Restaurant (1941)

New Orleans
dookychaserestaurant.com

When Dooky Chase's opened in NOLA's Tremé district in the forties, "there were very few places where Blacks could have a meal in a safe environment," says current proprietor Stella Chase Reese. "Three pieces of fried chicken with French fries and tomato salad cost just \$1.39!" In the sixties—when her mom, chef Leah Chase (dubbed the Queen of Creole Cuisine), led the biz—activists like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Thurgood Marshall met there to strategize on the fight for civil rights. Now everyone from former President Barack Obama to Jay-Z joins locals and tourists to partake of the home-style-cooking buffet.

OUR PICKS: Feast on Creole Gumbo, Red Beans and Rice and Shrimp Clemenceau.

REVERED AND REVVING UP

For comfort and culture

Kansas City Cuisine
Sisters Deborah and Mary Jones inherited Jones Bar-B-Q (1980) from their dad, Leavy B. Jones, Sr. Try the combo platters.

O Oakland
Creole BBQ Shrimp & Grits (above) top the menu at chef Tanya Holland's Brown Sugar Kitchen (2008) in Oakland.

Windy City Eats
Try something new at Chicago's Virtue (2018). Chef Erick Williams suggests the gizzards and his killer pork chops.

Africa @ San Francisco
At her EKO Kitchen (2019), chef Simileoluwa Adebajo cooks Nigerian food the way her mother and grandmother did.

St. Louis Love
At Sweetie Pie's Upper Crust (1997), Ike and Tina Turner's former backup singer Robbie Montgomery has patrons singing her praises.

Hollywood Chicks
Herb Hudson opened his first Roscoe's House of Chicken N Waffles (1975) in Tinseltown. Now he has seven, with an eighth location on the way.