

Dining With the Stars

Some of the South's best restaurants are owned by celebrities. Here, five of our favorites and the don't-miss meals at each.

BY JENNIFER MCKENZIE FRAZIER



Emily Saliers and Scott Peacock serve classic Southern fare at Watershed.



LEFT: Once a garage, Watershed now shines brightly in Decatur.

1 EMILY SALIERS'S *Watershed*

What To Know: A visit to Watershed restaurant in Decatur, Georgia, feels a bit like an Indigo Girls song: easy, laid-back, and comforting. That should come as no surprise: Emily Saliers of the well-known band is one of the owners. But the restaurant isn't a celebrity gimmick. The chef is James Beard Award-winner Scott Peacock, who serves fancified Southern staples in this former gas station. "Scott's focus is seasonal and freshly prepared," says Emily. "There's nothing out of a can. His approach is very simple, but he has a way of making simple stunning." That's a good philosophy for the restaurant's location in Decatur, which is striking its own identity inside the big city.

What To Order: pan-fried chicken (a Tuesday specialty), sharp house-made pimiento cheese, hot vegetable plate (differs daily), "Very Good Chocolate Cake" made with cooked frosting and a sour cream batter

SL Tip: On Monday all wines are 50% off (consumed there, not taken home). Early reservations recommended Tuesday nights because the fried chicken is so popular.

406 West Ponce De Leon Avenue, Decatur, GA; watershedrestaurant.com or (404) 378-4900

2 DOLLY PARTON'S *Dixie Stampede*

What To Know: Dolly Parton's place in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, brings new meaning to "dinner and a show." The 35,000-square-foot arena is decorated like a Southern mansion. Actors, comedians, and 32 horses perform while you eat with your hands (no utensils is part of the experience). It feels like a picnic with 1,000 friends.

What To Order: You don't actually have a choice! The set menu includes a biscuit, creamy veggie soup, rotisserie chicken, smoked pork tenderloin, corn on the cob, a baked potato, and an apple turnover.

SL Tip: Arrive an hour early to see a bluegrass band called Mountain Ruckus. (Slip some plastic utensils in your purse!)

3849 Parkway, Pigeon Forge, TN; dixiestampede.com or 1-800-356-1676

3 GLADYS KNIGHT'S *Chicken & Waffles*

What To Know: Gladys Knight's three Atlanta restaurants perfect the art of down-home soul food (collards, grits, and mac and cheese—and, of course, chicken and waffles). The newest location, opened in February, has chic brown leather sofas, a stage for live entertainment, and an outdoor patio. Celebrity photographs on the walls are fun to look at while you wait.

What To Order: "The Midnight Train" (a waffle and four fried chicken wings) and the sweet potato cheesecake

SL Tip: The restaurant stays open until 11 p.m. on weekends. If you're going for lunch on Sunday, know this is one of the busiest times of the week.

3495 Peachtree Parkway, Johns Creek, GA; gladysandron.net or (404) 874-9393

PHOTOGRAPHS: ROBBIE CAPONETTO (ABOVE AND CENTER); MARK PETERSON/REDUX (PARTON); PHIL MCCARTEN/REUTERS/CORBIS (KNIGHT)



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BILL MURRAY'S
Murray Bros. Caddyshack

What To Know: You know you've arrived at Murray Bros. Caddyshack, the movie-inspired restaurant in St. Augustine, Florida, when you see the golf cart crashed into the side of the building. The reminders don't stop there. Murray family pics and autographed pro golfer headshots adorn the walls; a lawn mower hangs suspended from the ceiling; a copy of the *Caddyshack* script sits on display; and waiters dress like caddies. While the menu features mostly sports-bar fare, the lighthearted atmosphere is the reason to come here. Fore!

What To Order: an old-fashioned hamburger (the ground chuck patties are hand-formed daily).

SL Tip: This isn't the place to entertain a serious conversation; the noise reaches toddler-at-the-playground levels.

455 South Legacy Trail, St. Augustine, FL (at World Golf Village); murraybroscaddyshack.com or (904) 940-3673



Texas legend Johnny Nicholas

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GLORIA ESTEFAN'S
Larios on the Beach

What To Know: You'll find pop singer Gloria Estefan's Cuban influence throughout Larios in Miami Beach. The dark paneling and coral, brown, and blue colors feel very Old Havana, her birthplace. The menu features all Cuban specialties, Latin music blares overhead, and couples salsa dance. The great view of Ocean Drive provides prime people-watching opportunities. Celebrity sightings have included Gwyneth Paltrow, Julia Roberts, and Beyoncé.

What To Order: Vaca Frita, marinated flank steak, fried plantains with garlic sauce, Churrasco (grilled skirt steak with a flavorful chimichurri sauce). And don't forget the Mojitos—they're some of the finest on Ocean Beach.

SL TIP: Arrive around 5:30 p.m. to get a good table near the windows.

820 Ocean Drive, Miami Beach, FL; bongoscubancafe.com or (305) 532-9577

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JOHNNY NICHOLAS'S
Hill Top Cafe

What To Know: Grammy Award-winner Johnny Nicholas (formerly of Texas swing band Asleep at the Wheel) owns this little white-painted wooden restaurant and music venue "inconveniently located in the middle of nowhere." Christmas lights and old neon signs light the interior, where some of the memorabilia on the walls dates back to 1929. The pleasingly eclectic menu jumps from Greek to Cajun to comfort foods—Mediterranean olives, seafood boudin, and chicken-fried steak blend together surprisingly well.

What To Order: "T for 1" Greek's Special Tenderloin with olive oil, garlic, and pepper

SL Tip: So popular on weekends, you'll need reservations. Or come early (at 5 p.m.) or late (at 8:30 p.m.).

10661 North U.S. 87, Doss, TX; hilltopcafe.com or (830) 997-8922 *



ABOVE: Hill Top Cafe offers a diverse menu, from Stuffed Pork Chops (front plate) to Crab Cakes.