



WHAT'S CLASSIC
— and —
WHAT'S COMING

Charleston

BY BROOKE PORTER KATZ

Charleston is a city of contrasts.

There's the charming side, with its cobblestone streets, flower-filled window boxes, and shop owners always ready with a smile. Then there's the edgier, more contemporary side, one of trendy designer boutiques, of-the-minute restaurants, and a sophisticated cocktail scene. To highlight the Holy City's duality, we asked a panel of local experts to weigh in on topics ranging from architecture and the arts to shopping and nightlife. Here, they share both the timeless, not-to-miss spots that have made Charleston what it is today—and the new places that will define the city's future.



HISTORY

"I like to think of Charleston as America's most historic city. The most prominent house museum is the grand, Federal-style **Nathaniel Russell House** (historiccharleston.org), which is set on one of the largest lots in the historic district. Known for its free-flying curving staircase, it's furnished with period pieces dating back to 1808. And the garden there is my favorite in town; we keep it planted year-round.

Each spring we have the month-long **Festival of Houses and Gardens** (historiccharleston.org), when the public is invited to go inside the private residences and gardens that are hidden behind the brickwork. Tickets go on sale November 1.

About twenty-five minutes from downtown, **Magnolia Plantation & Gardens** (magnoliaplantation.com) has extensive gardens, with some parts dating back more than 300 years. There are many varieties of camellias and azaleas, flowers that were first planted when Charleston was founded as a port city.

We're bringing history into the digital age at the **Aiken-Rhett House** (historic-charleston.org). The former governor's mansion has been called an urban plantation, with a main house and properties in the back where enslaved Africans would have lived. We are creating a 3-D rendering of how the drawing room would have appeared in the 1800s—complete with paint finishes, wallpaper, furniture, and curtains—which will be displayed on a touch-screen computer."



Kitty Robinson is the executive director of the Historic Charleston Foundation.



Nathaniel Russell House

ARCHITECTURE

"King Street itself is this great slice of the city. The nineteenth-century **Miles Brewton House** on 27 King Street is spectacular, and the architecture is so well-preserved. It's privately owned, but it's great to ponder from outside the incredible wrought-iron fence. The moldings on the cornices are intricately hand-carved with Georgian details.

Farther up King, across the street from the Charleston Library Society, is this easy-to-miss path that meanders into the graveyard of the Gothic Revival-style **Unitarian Church** (charlestonuu.org). The interior has these slender floor-to-ceiling columns that fan out into intricately designed plaster arches, which intersect across the ceiling. The churchyard itself is this wild and romantic little garden that totally takes you into another place.



John Hildreth is the director of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Southern Office.

Another sliver of architectural history is **Philip Simmons Museum House** (philipsimmons.us); some

of the Gullah tour groups stop there. Simmons, who passed away a few years ago, was a Smithsonian fellow who designed wrought-iron fences and gates. It's a great spot that shows why Charleston looks the way it does.

A few blocks from there is the historic **Cigar Factory** (thecigarfactorycharleston.com). After standing vacant for many years, it's now being completely redeveloped with retail, office, and event space. It's probably the biggest private commercial rehab in the city's history. When it opens [this fall], it's going to be a great addition.

And this is going to seem funny, but the **Ravenel Bridge** (ravenelbridge.net), which opened in 2005, is an important development. It has a dramatic, modern design, but I love that there's pedestrian and bicycle access, which has spectacular views of the harbor and the peninsula. There are people on that bridge at all hours."



Cigar Factory



Ravenel Bridge

RUSSELL HOUSE: CHARLESTON CVB; ROBINSON: RICK MCKEE; JOHN HILDRETH: COURTESY OF JOHN HILDRETH; CIGAR FACTORY: ALEXANDER FOX; BRIDGE: CHARLESTON CVB; ANN LONG: COURTESY OF ANN LONG FINE ART; JACOB GALLERY: JEREMY HALWELL; READ: COURTESY OF GEORGE READ DUPREE; NATHALIE DUPREE



Ann Long Fine Art

ART & ANTIQUES

"The very best antique dealers in town form a small cluster on Lower King Street. Three in particular should not be missed—**John Pope Antiques** (johnpopeantiques.com), **David Skinner Antiques** (davidskinnerantiques.com), and **Tucker Payne Antiques** (tuckerpayneantiques.com)—with owners who possess 'an eye' spoken of in knowing and sometimes hushed tones among antique specialists. It is highly unusual to find three in one small city—London has about six. In brief, visit their shops, which defy easy description. Quality, finesse, wonder, and some reevaluation await within.

A few blocks away across Broad Street, **Charleston Renaissance Gallery** (charlestonrenaissancgallery.com) has handled the best of the best—Audubon prints, rare maps, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century paintings, all related to the South—for the last forty-five years. The diversity of works that share wall space here is absolutely dazzling, even for gallery veterans.

Across the street and up a few doors is **Helena Fox Fine Art** (helenafoxfineart.com). A thousand interpretations of diffused light prevail here in superb

plein air works, mostly of Charleston environs. And **Ann Long Fine Art** (annlongfineart.com) specializes in contemporary figurative paintings executed with the finesse of Northern Italian masters, but with a decidedly a modern edge. Keep a keen eye out for paintings by part-time Charlestonians Jill Hooper and Ben Long.

Centering the small sea of modern art on Upper King is the **Rebekah Jacob Gallery** (rebekahjacobgallery.com). The gallery represents a national stable of first-rate painters, sculptors, and photographers. There are few experiences more exciting than seeing new works in the paint-spattered spaces where they were conceived. At nearby **Redux** (reduxstudios.org), Charleston's loft-like incubator of young, up-and-coming artists, monthly exhibitions, courses in painting and printmaking, and a dozen studios await."



Rebekah Jacob Gallery



George Read is co-founder of Read & Mullin LLC, an appraiser of fine arts, antiques, coins, maps, and more. He has published more than seventy-five articles on the arts and antiques market.



My Charleston NATHALIE DUPREE

New restaurants are opening in Charleston like mad. I've never seen a town flowing with such enthusiasm for food. The amazing thing is that the older restaurants are more than holding their own. Also, we don't have many huge restaurants with large crowds, so the food is more individuated.

The Ordinary (eattheordinary.com) is a new one by the James Beard Award winners at **FIG** (eatatfig.com). It's in an old bank building with high ceilings, and it has really wonderful oysters and seafood. **Edmund's Oast** (edmundsoast.com) has a lovely group that's served with a variety of fresh peas and ham hock, and seasoned with fennel, cumin, and coriander to give it a Moroccan flavor. I also like **SNOB (Slightly North of Broad)** (mavericksouthernkitchens.com), which has a nice bistro ambience. They don't do anything too far out, but it's all New Southern and fresh, and the chef is a leader in Charleston cuisine. And **Hominy Grill** (hominygrill.com) is one of my very favorite restaurants. It's a James Beard winner, but it's a very easygoing restaurant with wonderful seafood and down-home food done in a sophisticated way.

Charleston Grill (charlestongrill.com) has some of the best food in the city as well as the best jazz. There is nothing better than eating a crab cake in the bar area and listening to jazz.

As the founding chairman I'm biased, but I think the **Charleston Wine and Food Festival** (charlestonwineandfood.com) has positioned us as a food town and enhanced the reputation of the city.

Among Charleston's historical sites, **Drayton Hall** (draytonhall.org) is a fine example of Palladian architecture and has worked at bringing to light the role of slaves in the plantation. **Middleton Place** (middletonplace.org) has regular showings of planting and reaping rice, and has a furnished home worth touring. —AS TOLD TO IAN PALMER

Nathalie Dupree is the award-winning author of New Southern Cooking and several other cookbooks. She lives in Charleston and is the founding chairman of the Charleston Wine and Food Festival.



Oysters from Leon's

Country chefs; the shrimp and grits is ironclad.

As for what's new, we're in a mode where people from the beverage industry are opening restaurants.

Leon's (leonsoystershop.com) is a brand-new oyster hall from Brooks Reitz, the former bar manager at FIG and manager of The Ordinary. Patrick and Fanny Panella, who own the high-end wine bar Bin 152, recently opened **Chez Nous** (843-579-3060) in a romantic old Charleston alley. They tricked it out beautifully, and the food is not your stuffy French cuisine. The daily-changing menu also focuses on Italian- and Spanish-influenced dishes. And **Edmund's Oast** (edmundsoast.com) is the brainchild of the two bearded dudes who run the craft-brew retailer Beer Exchange. Their pickled shrimp toast is the defining dish and sends the message that this is a freethinking kitchen. It'll be interesting to see what Chef Andy Henderson does in the future. And this fall, they're expanding with an outdoor bar and a covered dining area called The Bower.

The Palace Hotel (843-501-7994) is carving out a whole new neighborhood on the east side for fine food. Chef Blake Joyal, the former butcher at FIG, is stepping up hot dogs with toppings like wasabi nori, kimchi, and red-curry mango. A few blocks away, **Butcher and Bee** (butcherandbee.com) feels like a food lab, with a lot of collaborative special dinner events and pop-ups. It's open from 11:00 to 3:00 two times a day, so it's a lunch place that does late nights for people in the food and beverage world. We usually get a midday sandwich and kick-ass salad with ingredients like pomegranate seeds and other ingredients you don't normally see here."



Charleston natives and brothers Matt and Ted Lee are the authors of three cookbooks, most recently *The Lee Bros. Charleston Kitchen*.



Chez Nous

DINING

Dave's Carry Out (843-577-7943) is a classic that's totally worth it. It's charming and does the fried fish and traditional Low Country thing. They also do amazing seafood platters. There are just a couple of tables, so it's mostly take-out. **Bowens Island Restaurant** (bowensislandrestaurant.com) is another classic. The oyster roast is one of its great distinctive features; it's one of the only places you can experience that kind of roast without being invited to a person's house. The place to lunch downtown is **Slightly North of Broad** (mavericksouthernkitchens.com)—better known as SNOB—which opened in the late 1980s and has a dedicated local clientele. Frank Lee has been one of the most consistent, true Low



Charleston Place

HOTELS

"You can't overlook the landmark of **Charleston Place** (charlestonplace.com). After twenty-eight years, it still manages to be Charleston's most elegant option. There's a rooftop spa and pool, which continually upgrade and reinvent their services; don't miss the Moroccan oil massage.

On the corner of Meeting and Market, the Relais & Châteaux **Planters Inn** (plantersinn.com) remains relevant due to its unflinching commitment to service. That dedication can

SHOPPING

"In the Antique District, the lowest part of King Street, **Berlin's** (berlinclothing.com) is one of Charleston's longest-operating stores, open since 1883 and still owned by the Berlin family. The men's store offers custom suits and designer labels.

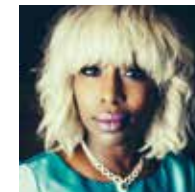
Dixie Dunbar (dixiedunbarstudio.com) is one of the most unique jewelry stores in town. All pieces are handmade by designer Soteria Kontis and feature intricate details like freshwater pearls, metal, leather, silk, and semiprecious stones. This is where you go for a statement piece.

Moving a few blocks north on King, **Worthwhile** (shopworthwhile.com) always has an out-of-this-world window display. Thanks to regular buying trips in France, you can expect a variety of Parisian finds and other trinkets from abroad. At **Croghan's Jewel Box** (croghansjewelbox.com), which has been in business for more than 100 years, you'll find high-end pieces and estate jewelry, plus opulent dining sets and a solid collection of men's watches. For fashions from Alexander Wang, Carven, and the like, there's **Hampden** (hampdenclothing.com). They also have an accessories and shoe store next door. Another longtime local favorite is **Copper Penny** (shopcopperpenny.com), an upscale women's boutique.

Upper King has been gaining speed over the last few years. Jamie Lin Snider—the owner and designer at **JLINSNIDER** (jlinsnider.myshopify.com)—is the darling of Upper King, welcoming customers into a universe of vintage Gucci, YSL, and Dior. It's not uncommon to walk into a happening party in the back courtyard, complete with a graffiti wall and a DJ. I love her collection of African dashikis.

Located in a cozy space, **Ellington** (843-722-7999) is filled with exclusive designers such as Planet, Babette, Emmelle, and Matti Mamane. You'll find unique textures and silhouettes mixed in with basic wardrobe essentials and bold accessories.

Just off Upper King in Cannonborough, **Indigo & Cotton** (indigoandcotton.com) is a stellar menswear store—the go-to shop for hipsters and preppers alike. In addition to great brands like The Hill-Side, Imogene & Willie, and Engineered Garments, I love the variety of accessories, from ties to socks. Nearby, **Mac & Murphy** (macandmurphy.com), set in a charismatic century-old refurbished storefront, carries a wonderful variety of stationery and accessories. There is wall-to-wall charm, with paper goods from top lines such as Kate Spade, Jack and Lulu, and Rifle Paper Co."



Ayoka Lucas is founder of Charleston Fashion Week, style director at Charleston Magazine, and a freelance fashion stylist and consultant.

OYSTERS: ERIN CONNELLY; CHEZ NOUS, CHARLESTON PLACE, WORTHWHILE: JEREMY HARWELL; LEE BROS.: BEN FINK; INDIGO: OLIVIA RAE JAMES; LUCAS: AYOKA LUCAS; GIDICK: KINSEY GIDICK

be seen from the teddy bears that greet you in the rooms to the helpful concierge. And a meal at the on-site Peninsula Grill is much more than the famed coconut cake—trust me.

It could be easy to overlook the **HarbourView Inn** (harbourviewcharleston.com), tucked down on Vendue, but it's one of my favorites. The location right on Waterfront Park is fantastic, and this place gets extra points for having spacious rooms, a more-than-helpful front desk staff, and jelly beans in the lobby.

The latest in luxury accommodations to hit the city, **Zero George** (zerogeorge.com) is possibly the most stylish and romantic inn I've ever seen. It's incredibly quiet—a surprising retreat in the Ansonborough neighborhood. The tucked-away courtyard encourages sunset happy hours, while the rooms have classic high ceilings.

And all eyes are on the forty-one-room **Spectator Hotel** (spectatorhotel.com), which is scheduled to open in spring of 2015. The boutique prop-



Indigo & Cotton



Worthwhile

erty—just one block from the Historic Charleston City Market—aims to be a social gathering place, with a bar serving classic cocktails. But Charleston has a lot of spots known for their cocktail programs, so Spectator will need to up the ante."



Kinsey Gidick is a writer and editor at Charleston City Paper, where she handles the Cuisine and Arts sections.

CULTURE

"In the performing arts world, Russian violinist Yuriy Bekker recently became the acting artistic director of the **Charleston Symphony Orchestra** (charlestonsymphony.com). The symphony has had some ups and downs and is now on the up—and Yuriy is part of the reason. He's rethought what a symphony orchestra should be. People often think it's about having seventy people on stage at one time, but he's divided it into smaller ensembles that



Nigel Redden is general director of Charleston's Spoleto Festival and director of Lincoln Center Festival in New York.

cater to smaller audiences. And his taste in music is broad, which I think reflects Charleston. And the **Pure Theatre** (puretheatre.org) is a company to think about. Founded in 2003, they do interest-

ing, non-mainstream work in a small space on Upper King.

As far as venues go, I'm looking forward to **Gaillard Center** (gaillard-charleston.com), a new performance and event space set to open in spring of 2015. Designed by neoclassical architect David M. Schwarz, it's going to reflect what Charleston has become, which is a beautiful and sophisticated city.

Last, they're totally rethinking the **Gibbes Art Museum** (gibbesmuseum.org), which is undergoing a complete renovation and is set to reopen in spring of 2016. The first floor will be free to the public, with a new cafe, courtyard, and classroom space. The whole second level, which will showcase the permanent collection, is being redesigned, with better flow and room for more works to be on display. And the third floor will have the special and traveling exhibitions."



Gibbes Art Museum



Enda Walsh's *Penelope* at Pure Theatre



Charleston Grill

MUSIC

"There are a lot of restaurants where the music is part of the experience—this has been a big part of the live local scene for a long time. Both **Charleston Grill** (charlestongrill.com) and **High Cotton** (mavericksouthernkitchens.com) have jazz seven nights a week.

Charleston Music Hall (charlestonmusichall.com) is an older venue downtown that seats about 1,000 people. It's the home of the local twenty-piece big band Charleston Jazz Orchestra, and they also bring in national and international acts, such as Zakir Hussain, one of the world's best tabla players.

Regional and locals bands come to play at funkier, midsize joints like the **Pour House** (charlestonpourhouse.com) and the **Tin Roof** (843-571-0775) in West Ashley. And at **Voodoo Tiki Bar** (voodootikibar.com), there's live salsa with a Cuban lounge quartet on Sundays, plus a Tuesday night jazz concert series.

A new listening room in town that's totally dedicated to the experience of the music is the **Mezz** (mezzdowntown.com), which I helped open in 2012. The stage, lights, sound—everything is specifically designed for the music, like what you would get at Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York or Blues Alley in Washington, D.C. We're focusing primarily on jazz, but I've done shows with musicians from the symphony orchestra. It seats fewer than seventy and has that supper club kind of feel."



Quentin Baxter is a native Charlestonian, world-class drummer, and musical director of the Charleston Jazz Initiative.

NIGHTLIFE

"Charleston's nightlife scene has undergone a shift in recent years, with the emphasis moving from dive-y bars to more high-end cocktail joints. But there are still some traditional spots that do it well. In Charleston Place Hotel, **Thoroughbred Club** (charlestonplace.com) is old school in all the right ways. It's the ideal spot for a pre-dinner drink—with or without a jacket—before eating at Charleston Grill. For something off-the-beaten-path of downtown, there's **Gene's Haufbrau** (843-225-4363), the oldest continually operating bar in town. Head here for board games and beer. If you prefer inventive cocktails, the speakeasy-inspired **Gin Joint** (thejinjoint.com) recently opened on East Bay Street. The 'Bartender's Choice' section on the menu lets you order by adjectives like fizzy and spicy, which they'll use to mix up something special. And local bartenders love **The Belmont** (thebelmontcharleston.com) on Upper King. Men in ties pour classic cocktails and extensive spirits while an Afrobeat soundtrack plays and black-and-white movies are projected on the wall. Order a whiskey and the housemade pop-tart."



Timmons Pettigrew is the author of Charleston Beer and founder of CHSBeer.org.

REDDEN: PETER FRANK; EDWARDS: GIBBES; JULIA LYNN PHOTOGRAPHY; PURE THEATRE: DAVID MANDEL PHOTOGRAPHY; BELMONT: JEREMY HARWELL; PETTIGREW: CHRYS RYNEARSON; CHARLESTON GRILL: CHARLESTON GRILL; BAXTER: THE MEZZ; REESE MOORE PHOTOGRAPHY; POUR HOUSE: THE CHARLESTON POUR HOUSE; RUCKER: JIM WRIGHT



The Belmont



Mezz



Pour House exterior art



My Charleston DARIUS RUCKER

I always say we don't have the number of restaurants that New York has, but the quality rivals it. At **FIG** (eatatfig.com), there's this gnocchi Bolognese, which is the single greatest Italian dish I've had. It is absolutely amazing. I tell everyone who comes to town and can't get a reservation to go sit at the bar just to order it. The seafood is the thing to get at **Red Drum** (reddrumrestaurant.com). It's the one place where I get something different every time. For something sweet, there's **Kaminsky's** (kaminskys.com). They supply desserts to restaurants all over Charleston. I love their coconut cake—it's literally to die for.

I love going to the **Windjammer** (the-windjammer.com) on Isle of Palms to have a beer and listen to a band; they book a lot of national acts. The bar has been there since we were playing clubs back in the early 90s. The great thing about Charleston is you can walk into any of these little restaurants and there is someone playing guitar.

The beaches here are beautiful, and they're not crowded—even in the main season, you can always find a spot. I love going with my kids to **Isle of Palms, Sullivan's Island**, and **Folly Beach**. You can do a day trip and just sit on the beach all day, playing and swimming.

I go down to the Battery all the time to walk around with the kids. I took a tour once with **Tommy Dew** (tommydewswalkingtour.com) and was blown away. He gets really deep into history and what happened around there. And I love trips to **Fort Sumter** (nps.gov/fosu/index.htm), where the first shots of the American Civil War were fired.

What I love most about Charleston are the people. Locals always go out of their way to help tourists and others. It has the nicest people in the world, and that's a fact."

Grammy Award-winning singer and former Hootie and the Blowfish front man Darius Rucker was born and raised in Charleston, and lives there with his family. His third solo country album, True Believers, was released last year.