

# Upfront

"Where do you like to eat?" I get that a lot. And I got it last week when I visited new Skidaway friends who moved to the area during pandemic-times.

An honest reveal of my personal preferences might seem unwise to other magazine or media types. Every restaurant is a prospective advertising client, so everyone you omit represents a potentially costly resentment. But our opinions and integrity have never been for sale. So, what the heck?...Here goes.

As timing has it, a place that came to my attention when the husband-and-wife team behind it met with me more than a year ago is opening the day that I write this. Chris Meenan is a New York-sharpened chef and Ericka Tiffany Phillips is a marketing and public relations pro. **Dottie's**, on the north side of Broughton, between Barnard and Jefferson Streets, is the product of their histories, experiences, and shared vision. I have watched the place come together and I ate there last week when they were doing dry runs. It's an awesome space and the food is superb.

But Ericka can explain Dottie's better than I: "We followed our family lines back to these streets and squares and salt marshes to reconnect to our personal histories while reaching out to the diverse and inspiring communities of growers, workers, and (prospective) guests who call this region home..."

Serving breakfast and lunch in a gorgeous, light-filled space, we invite you to duck out of the Broughton Street bustle for a moment of calm at the chef's counter or a good conversation with an old friend, underscored by the comforting aromas wafting through the open kitchen. You'll find freshly baked breads and pastries, house-cured charcuterie, a filling combo of soups, sandwiches and salads, and a decadent selection of fall-off-the-bone meats and fresh-off-the-boat seafood. We're here to share our traditions and techniques with you, recipes that have been lovingly passed down through generations of grandmothers who understood the value of real food, made real good...Dottie, our great-grandmother and guiding light, was born in the South, never met a stranger, and could spin a full meal out of whatever she had available lining the pantry shelves. If you were lucky, you got to sit quietly with her on the porch to take in the morning light and birdsong. If you were luckier, she fed you. She left a legacy of care for her community and a commitment to upward movement, leaving no one behind, and it is in this spirit that we invite you to stay a while and reflect on your own lineage of loving elders who held a seat at the table just for you. In praise of all grandmothers. In love of good food. Welcome to Dottie's."

As for my list, these are the places that continue to feed me, again and again, when I'm not doing what I love best in my own kitchen at home. Search them online for more info:

**The Grey** – The New York Yankees of Savannah eateries. Their commitment to quality, craft, and hospitality is unrivaled in the region and elevates their profile to international prominence. People come to Savannah to eat at The Grey, and they should. I leave with a sense of satisfaction that is hard to fully describe.

**Brochu's Family Tradition** – The best place to open here in a long time. Perfectly edited menu. Chicken better than you'll find anywhere or ever replicate yourself. It's loud. It's funky. It's hip. It's homey. The staff cares. The playlist is genius. This is what a modern city restaurant is supposed to be.

**Cotton and Rye** – It's always good. The servers stay year-after-year. They get to know you. They make you feel seen. The hostesses find you a spot. Their chicken thighs with a side of mac-and-cheese are Brochu's-level. And the peanut-butter-and-jelly-pie is my favorite dish (not limited to desserts) in town.

**Collins Quarter** – Anthony Debreceeny is a talented restaurateur and charismatic host. Which is interesting, since he did very different work (shipping/freight, I think) before opening his first of several spots in town. His OG eatery at the corner of Bull and Oglethorpe overflows with enthusiastic groups waiting to join the raucous weekend brunch party. His team continues to get breakfast, burgers, fancy nighttime fare, crafty cocktails, and artisanal coffee right...not an easy thing. And the room remains as cool as ever.

**Circa 1875** – I'm sitting on the bar side of this dual-entry place. And I'm having the burger and fries, as it's the tastiest and messiest in town. The end.

**PJ's (Thai Corner)** – Anna is short in stature and (very) long on charm. She smiles more in one night than I have in a lifetime. Eating in her little restaurant is like an invitation to a home...if the homeowner were Thai and really liked you. The food is conspicuously fresh and uncomplicated (if curries can be considered straight-forward).

**Toni's (Steakhouse)** – It's a family affair. Mom and Dad are in kitchen these days, and the boys handle the front of the house. The ethos is consistency. They wouldn't feed you anything they wouldn't be happy to eat in their own (old-world-inspired) home. "Toni's Signature Steak" has its name for good reason. The schnitzel is always a hit, and it's fun to hear the mallet pounding it to order in the kitchen. Start with "provoleta." Who doesn't like melted cheese?!

**Troy** – The strip-center aesthetic reminds you of the places your parents took you as a kid. But the Southeastern European/Middle Eastern eats are legit. The staff is conversational and seems happy to be there. The desserts are sinful and homemade.

**Tequila's Town/Tacos and Tequila** – A couple of very nice guys have built a mini-empire on notch-above quality, efficient service, approachable pricing, and addictive chips. They are deservedly busy...they're there when your Mexican cravings arise.

**Bull Street Taco** – Slightly "chef-ier" Mex/Tex-Mex than TTTandT, but not unnecessarily so. There is no better burrito around – and it's huge. Use in place of a dumbbell if you're in a pinch. BST is always fun.

**NaaN Appetit/NaaN on Broughton** – I like Indian food. I've never been to India. These places feel authentic to me, but what do I know? I know that the stuff tastes great and I leave full and I want go back every month or so.

**The Crab Shack** – I've never ordered anything other than "The Sampler." And I've never thrown my scraps through a hole in the middle of the table anywhere else.

Enjoy.

*Scott A. Lauriat*

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