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COMEBACK

*The unlikely
return of
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City whales*

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Rachel
Gordon at
Rainbow
Row

Charleston

An insiders' guide to the Holy City



Artist Fletcher
Williams III in
White Point Garden

LOCAL TAKES

CHARLESTON

FIVE NOTABLE LOCALS SHOW US
HOW TO DO *THEIR TOWN, THEIR WAY*

With a rare mix of historic beauty, culinary style, sea and sunshine, Charleston is known for its unique Southern charm—and yet the city is now redefining it. Today, the quaint cobblestone streets of the downtown peninsula feature stately Georgian and Victorian homes and world-class cuisine. But the Holy City's past is not as pretty as the architecture it left behind, and a dialogue with history is both necessary and ongoing. Meanwhile, a slew of forward-looking entrepreneurs and creatives are changing the culinary landscape, pushing artistic boundaries and building community—invigorating this Lowcountry city with new energy. Here, we dive into all the splendor, complexity and flavor that is Charleston by following five locals as they show us what they love most about their hometown.

Words **STINSON CARTER**
Photography **PETER FRANK EDWARDS**

Tasting the Past and Future of Charleston's Seafood

MIKE LATA
CHEF, RESTAURATEUR

IN 1998, A 25-YEAR-OLD CHEF, freshly recruited from Atlanta to Charleston, headed out to a seafood shack called **Bowens Island Restaurant**—a marshfront institution south of the city that has been in business since 1946. He watched a man shovel oysters into a pot over a wood fire, then pour the steamed clusters onto a table to be pried open and savored. It was his first South Carolina oyster roast—his first taste of the warm trapped brine, the slightly undercooked oyster. “It was the single best seafood experience I’d had in my life,” says chef Mike Lata, as we gaze upon Bowens today. “My aha moment.”

In the 22 years since, Lata has arguably become the most significant chef-restaurateur in Charleston, opening the lauded ingredient-driven restaurant **FIG** in 2003, winning the 2009 James Beard Award for Best Chef: Southeast, and opening the sophisticated seafood hall **The Ordinary** in 2012.

It’s fitting that he’s taken me to the marsh to show me where his love affair with Lowcountry seafood began, but also fitting that we’re headed to downtown, where he has a Godfather-like presence around younger chefs and self-requesting foodies. From the **James Island** wetlands, we drive toward Charleston in his silver Ford pickup. Once over the bridge in downtown, our first stop is the **Delaney Oyster House** on **Calhoun Street**, where we sit on a



Clockwise from above: Mike Lata at his restaurant **The Ordinary**; **Bowens Island Restaurant**; the goods at **Delaney Oyster House**

candlelit side porch. I let Lata do the ordering: a half-dozen **Divine Pine** oysters from North Carolina, blue crab claws, crab rice and grilled shrimp with a sherry and garlic broth. It’s all delicious. “A very current perspective on modern seafood,” says Lata, and with a distinctive angle: **Delaney’s** chef, **Shamil Velazquez** (a James Beard Best Chef: Southeast semifinalist this year), is from Puerto Rico and brings Latin and Caribbean flavors to the Lowcountry’s bounty.

Our next stop is **Chubby Fish**, a nautical corner restaurant where chef **James London** offers a bold take on local seafood. London greets Lata with a handshake over the bar and rattles off his

menu favorites. Dishes arrive: grilled oysters, lamb ribs, grouper cheeks with rice and dashi, and a breathtaking Buffalo-fried triggerfish head. “Buffalo-fried triggerfish head? It’s a benchmark for creativity. It pushes boundaries,” raves Lata. “The city wasn’t ready for this eight or nine years ago, but look how busy it is on a Wednesday night. I’m impressed.”

Chubby Fish, like Lata’s restaurants, gets much of its product from local captain Mark Marhefka of Abundant Seafood in Shem Creek, just across the harbor. Marhefka has played a central role in shifting to more sustainable seafood by using alternate and non-imported species such as sheepshead and triggerfish. Lata, who helped lead the sustainable charge in Charleston, says working with a broad range of sometimes unusual seafood is challenging and takes time to master. “With pig or chicken, you can crack that code,” he says, “but with seafood you need a PhD.” On our way out, foodie fans spot Lata and request selfies. He politely obliges. “Believe it or not, I’m a lot more anonymous downtown now than I used to be,” he says, on the stroll back to his truck. “And I like anonymity.”

Our final stop is a nightcap at Lata’s own seafood restaurant, The Ordinary. It’s a palatial space



that even on a Wednesday has an energy that makes you feel you’re where you need to be. We sit at the marble-topped rum bar for an aged rum daiquiri—a drink so popular that they took it off the cocktail menu because it goes without saying. We share snapper crudo, steak tartare and smoked oysters. With the first bite, I’m reminded of why I’m interviewing Lata, tasting the two decades of refinement between his aha moment at Bowens Island and the dishes in front of us now.

This evening, Lata has told me about rising rents that make it tough for young chefs to get in the game, and that the city’s building boom has put stress on the very wetlands that provide the aquatic bounty. I ask him how the future looks for Charleston seafood. “If we can retain our fishing fleets, it can get even better,” he says. “The seafood coming into Shem Creek and Cherry Point, those are the things that make our culinary scene unique.” ▶

“IT WAS THE SINGLE BEST SEAFOOD EXPERIENCE I’D HAD IN MY LIFE. MY AHA MOMENT.”



Charleston

The Benefits of Slowing Down in Downtown

MOLLY FIENNING
ENTREPRENEUR

THE MORNING SUN GLEAMS ON Charleston Harbor as I climb the front steps of Molly Fienning's waterfront house on **The Battery**, the local term for the southern tip of the Charleston peninsula. Her modern-vernacular home, designed to evoke the colonial architecture around it, abuts a waterfront promenade that offers views of fishing boats, marshes and historic Fort Sumter in the distance. Despite her hectic schedule—she's the CEO of Red Clay Hot Sauce, cofounder of children's sunglasses line Babiators, and mother of four- and eight-year-old boys—she makes time every day for a walk alone along the harbor. "It's grounding," she says, "the only alone time I get all day."

The Manhattan native, who's lived in Charleston for the past seven years, is part of a wave of local female entrepreneurs, some of whom we'll be visiting today. Our first stop as we drive north on the peninsula is accessory



Above: Molly Fienning on her front porch
Below: Historic houses on the southern tip of Charleston



boutique **Candy Shop Vintage**. Owner Deirdre Zahl, a stylish New York expat wearing earrings of her own design, is setting up a display of '70s-inspired zodiac necklaces while Fienning and I peruse Zahl's jewelry line made with rice-like beads, inspired by the state's heirloom crop (rice). "I started making these when I realized there weren't many great souvenirs to buy in Charleston," says Zahl.

We next head across town to **The Cigar Factory**, a 19th-century brick behemoth built for cotton manufacturing, and later housing cigar production. It's now an upscale retail complex, and home to **The Water Room**, a nail spa owned by Fienning's friend Jessica Morse, with a focus on non-toxic and organic products. Inside it looks like a Scandinavian café, all light wood and white walls, and smells suitably organic, with none of the typical fumes. Fienning cruises the shelves and spots what she's after, a few bottles of Nue Co. calming fragrance. "I keep it in my desk drawer for workday >

"WE MAY LIVE IN A GOOD-OL'-BOY STATE, BUT CHARLESTON IS RUN BY ENTERPRISING WOMEN."



breaks,” she says, and gives me a spritz—woody, spicy, with a bit of smoke and cilantro.

Upstairs, in a shared artist space, we stroll past the hand-crafted fine jewelry of Jane Pope, who made the baroque pearl pendant Fienning is wearing, and the abstract works of Raven Roxanne, with whom Fienning launched a children’s book-publishing house called Lil Bit Lit. “We may live in a good-ol’-boy state, but Charleston is run by enterprising women,” says Fienning with a grin. She attributes her closeness with other female entrepreneurs to Charleston’s laid-back pace, which allows time for relationships to blossom. “Charleston harkens back to a more European lifestyle,” she says.

For lunch, we head to **Little Jack’s Tavern**, a cozy vintage clubhouse with padded booths, green gingham tablecloths and walls dotted with black and white vintage



DR. ELIJAH HEYWARD III
COO,
INTERNATIONAL
AFRICAN
AMERICAN
MUSEUM

One of my favorite places in Charleston is Sullivan’s Island, where I spend time at a “Bench by the Road,” installed by The Toni Morrison Society. These benches represent the locations where African captives were kept in quarantine before being sold into slavery. It’s a place for me to reflect, just as The Toni Morrison Society intended.

photos of Sinatra, prizefighters and other nostalgic semaphore. “I love that this place is Southern meets old-school Rat Pack,” she says. Fienning, who helped launch Red Clay five years ago and stepped in as CEO in 2018, tells me that Little Jack’s owner, Brooks Reitz, was the first Charleston restaurateur to put Red Clay Hot Sauce on its tables. It’s been a quick rise: The hot sauce is available nationally at The Fresh Market and will soon be available at Whole Foods.

We order *crudité* and Tavern Burgers with garlic herb fries. “A cheeseburger is one of my last-meal foods,” says Fienning between bites, “along with a dirty martini.” I can vouch that this is no ordinary cheeseburger: It’s a slider-sized delicacy with American cheese and sunchoke relish on a doughnut-soft bun, named one of the country’s top three burgers by *Bon Appétit* in 2017.

Before long, the interview’s focus falls prey to the burger, the booth and the indulgence of a lingering lunch on a pretty day in Charleston. I’m reminded of something Fienning said earlier that sums up not just the connection between her and the entrepreneurs and artists she’s introduced me to today, but also our few hours together: “You build friendships faster here, because this city lets you have the time to build them.” >

THE INTERVIEW’S FOCUS FALLS PREY TO THE BURGER AND THE INDULGENCE OF A LINGERING LUNCH ON A PRETTY DAY IN CHARLESTON.

Clockwise from top left: The cheeseburger at Little Jack’s Tavern; a shrimp boat on Jeremy Creek; Velvet Hammer cocktail at Cane Rhum Bar; Aiken-Rhett House; amberjack crudo with blood orange at Chubby Fish

SHIVER YOUR TIMBERS A well-executed tour of Charleston’s pirate past

In 1718 alone, at least 49 men were accused of piracy and hanged at Charleston’s White Point Garden, overlooking the harbor. Naturally, that’s where pirate expert Eric Lavender begins our tour. It’s hard to imagine this dreamy park was once a marshy gallows. Lavender (who, if you want to go big, can show up in pirate garb with a live parrot on his shoulder) says in colonial days, the town would leave executed pirates here “for three tides, as a warning to other scalawags.”

But were Charleston’s pirates, such as Anne

Bonny and Blackbeard, really so bad? “Depends how you feel about armed robbery and murder,” says Lavender as we hop in his car and cruise up East Bay Street to our next stop, the circa-1686 Tavern at Rainbow Row. A favorite pirate haunt, it likely served some convicted picaroons their final quart of ale.

Not everyone in the fledgling city saw pirates as outlaws. Lavender says that beyond pirates’ unholy behavior at establishments like the Pink House (c. 1694), which we pass on Chalmers Street, and which may have been

pirate Anne Bonny’s own house of ill repute buccaneers did a tidy business. Many a colonial “gentleman” had something to gain from contraband silks, whale oil, tobacco and rum.

Lavender notes that pirate commerce helped make Charleston the wealthiest city in the wealthiest colony in British North America. Its charming facade may obscure its swashbuckling past, but Lavender says it’s worth remembering that “pirates had a huge economic impact on the city.” —KINSEY GIDICK toursbylocals.com



Charleston

Barbecue, Ghosts and Rum

FLETCHER WILLIAMS III
ARTIST, SCULPTOR

FLETCHER WILLIAMS III, a Cooper Union-trained artist and Charleston native, has earned a reputation in the city somewhere between prodigal son and enfant terrible: a valuable asset to a community that he can't help but subvert. Over the past several months, Williams had a residency at Charleston's renowned **Gibbes Museum of Art** and created set elements for *Moonlight* director Barry Jenkins' new series, *Underground Railroad*. These days he's busy preparing an upcoming solo exhibition of illustrations and sculptures in one of downtown Charleston's antebellum mansions.

We've dodged crowds with a late lunch at famed **Rodney Scott's BBQ**, a temple of whole-hog barbecue in the fast-changing **North Central** neighborhood on the downtown peninsula. Williams orders his usual: a pound of ribs, collards, and mac 'n' cheese. James Beard Award-winning chef/pitmaster and owner Rodney Scott joins us at our table. It's been three years since Scott left his rural upstate hometown of Hemingway, South Carolina, and opened this Charleston location. Scott is well aware that he is part of a wave of change in the neighborhood: "I want everyone to feel like they have a place at the table," he says.

Williams recalls mornings as a kid when his dad would bring him to a barber shop just up the street. "My father was a City of Charleston police officer, and they'd open up the shop for us at



Above: Fletcher Williams III at the Aiken-Rhett House
Right: Williams' *Homestead*, 2018

7 a.m.—we'd be the first ones in there," says Williams. Against an onslaught of hip coffee, wine and garden shops, his boyhood barber shop, **Fresh Cuts Barber Shop No. 2**, is still within sight of our table. Besides ribs, Williams comes to the area to pick up supplies at **Artist & Craftsmen**, a beloved professional art store inside a labyrinthine three-story den of creativity run by fellow artists. Together with nearby contemporary art gallery and studio space **Redux**, North Central has the ingredients for an arts corridor.

We hop in the car and drive south into the historic heart of Charleston to the **Aiken-Rhett House**, a circa-1820 mansion once owned by former South Carolina Governor William Aiken, Jr., and now operated by the Historic Charleston Foundation as a museum. The building is no varnished version of the antebellum >



BOTTOM: COURTESY OF FLETCHER WILLIAMS III



“GIVEN MY REPUTATION, I DON’T KNOW WHAT THEY’RE EXPECTING. I COULD TRASH THE WHOLE NARRATIVE.”

“Whether you go inside or stay outside, there’s a presence here, this place is alive,” says Williams, looking around. “What does Charleston mean to you? Projects like this can pose that question.”

As the sun dips, we drive to nearby **Cane Rhum Bar**, where the manager greets him by name. Whenever he has friends in town, whether from rural South Carolina or Manhattan, he takes them here for a rum cocktail and a Taste of Cane to Share sampler. “It’s off the beaten path, and I like staying on the perimeter,” he says, “somewhere I can still feel like a local.”

We order Instant Vacation cocktails (Mount Gay infused with lemongrass and ginger with house-brewed ginger-beer float) and dig into jerk chicken and fried mahi with liberally applied exotic hot sauces. Williams riffs on Charleston’s relative affordability compared to New York and the local community that supports him. Yet Charleston doesn’t force him to settle for being a big fish in a small pond. “I’m pleased and shocked that I’m able to have relationships with large institutions while living in a small city,” he says, referencing major entities he’s worked with such as the Black Economic Alliance and Studio Museum in Harlem. “I have a responsibility to make important work, work that I care about,” he says. “I’m glad I’ve been able to pave my own way here.” >

Above: Rodney Scott slathering his famous pork at his namesake restaurant. Below: Gibbes Museum of Art

South, but a solemn place of asterisked beauty that looks as if a well-heeled family walked out with most of their furniture a century ago. Two-hundred-year-old heart-pine floors groan, French wallpaper flakes from the dusty plaster walls, marble fireplaces sulk in silence.

This spring, the museum will showcase Williams’ upcoming exhibition, “Promiseland,” in which he’ll position his pieces tellingly throughout the site, interacting with it. “Given my reputation, I don’t know what they’re expecting me to do. I could come in and trash the whole narrative,” he says with a half-smile. “It’s an opportunity to subvert what this place represents. The primary symbol is the fence—borders, access, subjugation of another group of people is packed into that.” He eyes the light on a tattered couch. “It’ll be a conjuring of sorts. I imagine this work interacting with the ghosts of this house.”

We stroll out to the quarters behind the mansion, where more than 20 enslaved people once lived.



KARALEE NIELSEN
FALLERT
RESTAURATEUR,
COFOUNDER,
GREEN HEART
PROJECT

When I cross the bridge to Folly Beach, 20 minutes outside town, I feel “island time” take over. Start at Jack of Cups with a local brew, then head nearby to Taco Boy for street corn and a house-infused pineapple margarita. Post-dinner, you can find live music and a tiny dance floor at Surf Bar.



Style and Substance on Upper King Street

RACHEL GORDON
GIFT AND
JEWELRY DESIGNER

I JOIN RACHEL GORDON AT A mirrored alcove table at **Malagón**, the tiny *tapería* a half-block off Charleston's restaurant and nightlife corridor of **Upper King Street**, which has, in the past decade, evolved from a relative hinterland into the heart of the city's hippest retail and nightlife scenes. She orders for both of us: seafood rice stew, serrano ham, salt-cod salad and a glass of effervescent Avino. Fine by me.

Gordon's confidence in her taste fuels both her career, designing for her nearby accessories boutique, **Grit & Grace**, and her affection for certain local businesses. **Malagón**, one of her favorite go-to spots, is a darling of locals and known for its cozy European atmosphere and impeccable food. "I love the paella and



their *cortado*," she says of **Malagón**. "Life is too short for bad coffee."

"I used to come up here to a fabric store called Read Brothers," Gordon says, gazing at the neighborhood. "It never changed; they sold the same fabric for a hundred years." But Charleston changed around it; the fabric and furniture stores are gone, with new restaurants, hotels and condos springing up here like mushrooms after rain. "It's only going to keep moving north," says Gordon.

Originally from Sharptown, Maryland, population 650, Gordon helped take care of her mother, who was ill at the time, after high school, but eventually graduated from the College of Charleston, paying the bills by bartending. The money was good, but she needed a creative outlet, which she found remaking

Clockwise from above: Rachel Gordon at Rainbow Row; her nightingale appliqué oyster dish at Grit & Grace; fideo noodles with squid in squid ink from Malagón; Candlefish boutique



heirloom wedding gowns into new creations. She began crafting oystershell ring dishes and giving them to wedding clients. “Suddenly all these brides are knocking down my door for ring dishes,” she says. Thus Grit & Grace was born.

The small-town cooperation of Charleston is actually integral to her company. “I knew when I started that I would need a lot of oystershells, and within a week I had agreements with local restaurants.” She learned on the job that there is a shortage of oystershells in the area marshes, so for every shell she sells, she donates 10 to be recycled to help create new oyster reefs.

After *cortado* and flan, we head a few blocks south on King Street to one of her favorite shops, **Ro Sham Beaux**, a lighting store known for beaded chandeliers, designed and made in Charleston. The staff greet Gordon like a dear friend—one of their signature Malibu chandeliers hangs in Gordon’s shop across the street, and she often enlists the staff as hand models for her product shots. She has a special affinity for places like this—not just locally owned, but selling products that are locally made. Another of her favorites is **Candlefish**, which pours all its candles on King Street. She laments the fact that rising rents



WINSLOW HASTIE
PRESIDENT & CEO,
HISTORIC
CHARLESTON
FOUNDATION

I draw inspiration from the foundation’s Nathaniel Russell House. When you think about the trials of everyday life in 19th-century America, it’s amazing that such magnificent architecture was possible, and it showcases the incredible skills and craftsmanship of the enslaved people who constructed these grand residences.



can be the mortal enemy of the cool owner-proprietor businesses that make the city special. “These are places I really believe in and I want them to succeed.”

We cross King Street to her second-floor boutique in an 1800s Charleston-style house. It sits above **Callie’s Hot Little Biscuit**, a carbohydrate altar with a permanent line out the door. Like the culture of Charleston itself, her design cues are coastal, colonial and West African. There’s a black-and-white photograph of her mother, who passed away in 2013, on a fireplace mantle overlooking her showroom—a young woman who strikingly resembles her daughter, and who inspired the name of the business. “She didn’t know how long she had, so she wrote me letters that I could always keep,” says Gordon. No matter what trial her daughter was facing at the time, her mother’s words of reassurance were always the same: “You can do it; you’ve got grit and grace.” >

“I LOVE THE PAELLA AND THEIR CORTADO. LIFE IS TOO SHORT FOR BAD COFFEE.”



TOP LEFT: HAIR BY RITA AT BERENICE’S SALON. HAT BY CAROLINA MILLER COMPANY. DRESS BY SPELL. JEWELRY BY GRIT & GRACE STUDIO. BOOTS BY FRYE. TOP RIGHT: JENNA MARIE WEDDINGS. BOTTOM RIGHT: OLIVIA RAE JAMES

Gullah Flavor South of Town

BJ DENNIS
CHEF, GULLAH
AMBASSADOR

AS I DRIVE SOUTH OUT OF Charleston on Highway 17, housing developments give way to tidal marshes and I start seeing roadside stands selling shrimp and boiled peanuts. I'm here along the rural coast to meet up with BJ Dennis, a Charleston-born private chef who has become the de facto culinary ambassador of Gullah culture. Gullah, or Gullah Geechee, is an African-American subculture unique to the coastal Southeast, where barrier islands both isolated Dennis' enslaved ancestors and acted as time capsules for their West African traditions, giving rise to a distinct language, cuisine, crafts and culture.

"This, for me, is the Lowcountry," Dennis says as we rendezvous in the small town of **Ravenel** and head into what seems like a normal gas station. Inside **Fuel Zone** there's a full-on mini cafeteria. "This is classic," Dennis says, eyeing the goods. "They have one of the best shrimp-and-grits around." We step up to a glass case and he recommends the fried chicken, stewed cabbage and red rice, a quintessential Gullah dish made with smoked sausage and tomatoes. The chicken is lightly battered, just the way Dennis likes it, the cabbage infused with the flavor of the pork it was stewed in, the red rice smoky and hearty. A massive serving is \$7.

We sit in a booth and talk about the passion for Gullah culture that defines Dennis' professional career. "There would be no Charleston without Gullah



BJ Dennis among oyster shells along a tidal creek near his home

culture. I want to teach people the story behind the food, the Gullah influence," he says. This influence ranges from fingerprints on the bricks of Charleston's antebellum mansions to intonations in the Charleston accent to the strong West African components (myriad stews and rices) that distinguish Gullah cuisine from typical Southern fare.

"I want our culture to learn to re-love ourselves," he says. It's a personal sentiment for him. He didn't fully appreciate his own heritage until he moved to St. Thomas to cook in his 20s. The islanders knew more about the Gullah of South Carolina than most Americans did. Now he uses events such as restaurant takeovers in downtown Charleston to serve heritage dishes like seafood

THE CRAB IS SO GOOD THAT I SAVE THE GARLIC SAUCE TO POUR OVER THE SHRIMP.



Deep-fried breaded whole crab from Fishnet Seafood

okra soup and coconut peanut-butter cream greens. It's his way to tell the Gullah story to others.

Our next stop is **Ravenel Seafood**, a roadside seafood house covered with murals of local fishing scenes. "There are no seafood houses in Charleston anymore," Dennis laments. Here you can find anything from conch stew to shark steaks, but people come from far and wide for their garlic blue crab. Enough shrimp and crab to feed a family will run you less than \$20—a far cry from downtown. We order garlic rock crab and a half-pound of steamed shrimp and forgo the profoundly tempting fried Oreos. The crab is so good that I save the left-over garlic sauce to pour over the shrimp, which aren't just "steamed" but also served in a bag so full of seasoned melted butter that we're left scrambling for crusty bread.

On the drive back to Charleston, Dennis doesn't want to leave out any hotspots, and points to **Dodge's**, another gas station-restaurant punching above its weight with double-battered fried chicken. We also peek into **Fishnet**, a seafood house that sells breaded whole blue crab—you get to eat the crispiness off your fingers as you crack the shells. He also raves about **Buckshot's**, his favorite Gullah restaurant these days, an hour north in the tiny marsh-side town of **McClellanville**.

We make one last stop at **Capt. Don's Seafood**, near Dennis' childhood home in the Charleston suburb of **West Ashley**, so he can pick up dinner. Inside, we find a couple dozen species of fresh fish on ice. Dennis explains that most high-end restaurant fish are deep-sea fish, and not common on Lowcountry dinner tables. "I didn't grow up with friends who had deep-sea fishing boats—we ate creek fish, like this sheepshead." He picks up the buck-toothed fish, examining its gills for freshness. "It's probably my favorite fish," he says, and sends it back for cleaning. "I grew up eating this way. We were poor, but by today's standards we were eating delicacies." **AW**



ANN MARSHALL
COFOUNDER,
HIGH WIRE
DISTILLING

Rent a powerboat and see the city from the water! Areas like Shem Creek, Morris Island and the Intracoastal Waterway let you explore the salty side of the Holy City. You'll need snacks, too, so I suggest bringing local brews from Edmund's Oast Brewing Co. and fried chicken from the local grocery store.

WHERE TO STAY



Southern Comfort
King Charles Inn

Centrally located close to both Market and King Street shopping, the King Charles has an accessible pool and sundeck as well as walking tours guiding visitors through Edgar Allan Poe's Charleston life.
kingcharlesinn.com



Historic Boutique
Zero George Street

A collection of colonial homes converted into 16 modern guest rooms in the historic Ansonborough neighborhood, Zero George Street exudes rustic appeal. The chef's tasting menu, curated by Vinson Petrillo, is worth the splurge.
zerogeorge.com



New Opulence
Hotel Bennett

A grand hotel in the middle of things, the Bennett opened last year with 179 rooms filled with colonial opulence. Over-the-top decor includes an oval champagne bar room with a dramatic crystal chandelier and unabashedly pink furniture.
hotelbennett.com

TOP: REESE MOORE; BOTTOM, LEFT TO RIGHT: COURTESY OF KING CHARLES INN, COURTESY OF ZERO GEORGE, MODIUS PHOTOGRAPHY