

bon appétit

OCTOBER 2009

EAT WELL / SAVOR LIFE



STARTERS / travel



NAVIGATOR

oxford, mississippi

For lovers of the spirit and deliciousness that are intrinsic to the American South, there's no better event than the Southern Foodways Alliance's annual symposium in Oxford (October 30 to November 1; southernfoodways.com). It celebrates the South in all its edible (and quaffable) incarnations. After the conference, eat up some culture at William Faulkner's home, Rowan Oak, then savor the local cuisine at these fine spots. NATHALIE JORDI

GO

Fly into Memphis, then rent a car for the 90-minute drive to Oxford. The theme of this year's conference is food and music. "We'll eat, we'll drink, and we'll listen to learned disquisitions on the Chitlin Circuit," says John T. Edge, the SFA's director.

STAY

Try the turn-of-the-century 512, a classic southern manse with a gargantuan two-story wraparound porch, complete with wooden rocking chairs. 512 Van Buren Avenue; rooms from \$105; 662-234-8043; the512oxford.com

EAT

1/ marie's lebanese cuisine
This local favorite recently reopened after having been closed while owner Marie Husni pursued a doctorate in mathematics. Not to be missed: Marie's signature casserole and *kibbeh*, a classic Lebanese dish of ground beef, bulgur, and pine nuts. 505 Heritage Drive; 662-236-3232; marieslebanesecuisine.com »



Shannon Adams of Honey Bee Bakery; cornmeal catfish at Taylor Grocery (above); local mom Katherine Beard and her family enjoy Oxford living (right).



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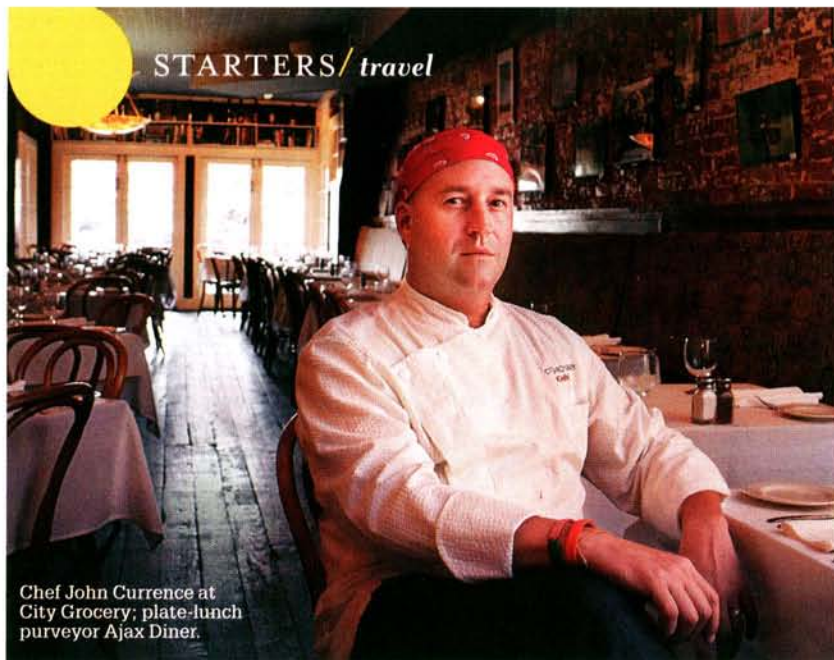
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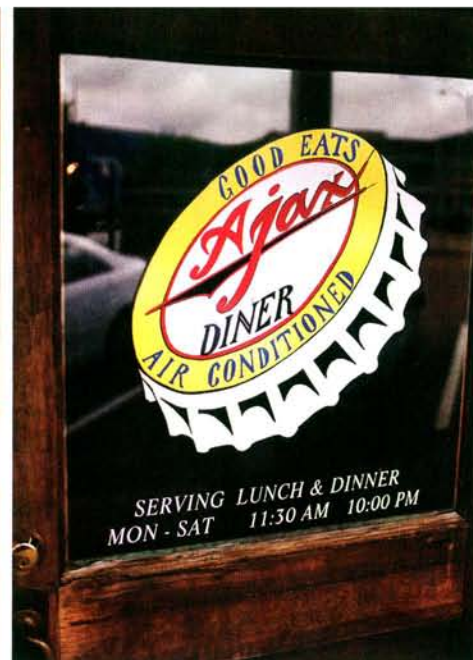
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Chef John Currence at City Grocery; plate-lunch purveyor Ajax Diner.



2/ big bad breakfast, 3/ bouré, 4/ city grocery, and 5/ snackbar
 Chef John Currence, reigning James Beard Award winner for Best Chef: South, heads up some of Oxford's best restaurants. At Big Bad Breakfast (719 North Lamar Boulevard), you'll find New Southern delights like Coca-Cola-brined fried chicken and home-cured Tabasco bacon. Bouré (309 North Lamar Boulevard) caters to families with shrimp po'boys and burgeoning burgers. We're fond of City Grocery's upstairs bar (152 Courthouse Square), which overlooks Oxford's town square; it's a nice place to have a local beer. Recently opened is Currence's latest: Snackbar (721 North Lamar Boulevard), a temple to bivalves in a pub setting. citygroceryonline.com

6/ phillips grocery
 What Phillips lacks in scenery—it sits across the street from Baptist Memorial Hospital—is more than made up for by its local food cred. While the menu offerings include lunchtime staples, the real reason to pay a visit is the widely lauded burger and fried accompaniments, such as fresh-cut fries, okra, and whole fried dill pickles. 2406 South Lamar Boulevard; 662-236-5951

7/ chevron food mart
 Okay, so this one comes out of left field. But the Chevron, on University and South Lamar, is the place for late-night socializing...and improbably good snacks. The quite literally named chicken-on-a-stick is oddly delicious,

especially if it's 1:00 a.m. and it has been a night of multiple Sazeracs. 502 South Lamar Boulevard; 662-234-0275

8/ taylor grocery & restaurant
 Head south on creepy, kudzu-lined Old Taylor Road until you see a sign: "Eat or we both starve." The cornmeal-christened catfish is greaseless and tender; the hush puppies are golden, buttery, and lush; and the peach cobbler—sublime. The walls are covered with years of signatures, and there's often live music. BYOB, be prepared to wait, and wear your dancing shoes. 4 County Road 338, Taylor; 662-236-1716; taylorgrocery.com

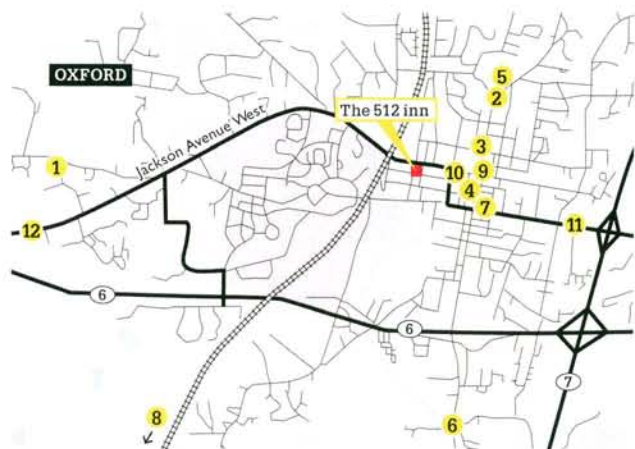
9/ ajax diner
 Oxford's best plate lunch: massive slabs of cheese-stuffed meatloaf, egg rolls filled with red beans and rice, hefty bricks of cornbread, and butter beans and turnip greens stewed in appropriately scandalous quantities of bacon and sugar, served with a battery of condiments. To aid digestion, avail yourself of the oversize pickled-okra-garnished Bloody Marys. 118 Courthouse Square; 662-232-8880

10/ bottletree bakery
 Saucer-size blueberry muffins and cinnamon rolls balance the high-octane coffee and

elegantly bluesy, retro vibe of this wonderful college-town coffee shop. Run by Cynthia Gerlach, an Ole Miss Southern Studies alumna who studied the folk art of the American South. 923 Van Buren Avenue; 662-236-5000

11/ tienda y taqueria mundo latino
 Local Latinos and frat boys with a taste for ultra-authentic Mexican food converge on this tiny taqueria for luscious, super-fresh tacos: carne asada, *al pastor*, and more. The Coca-Cola is imported from Mexico (made with cane sugar, not high-fructose corn syrup). The *menudo* is a sure hangover cure. 1921 University Avenue; 662-234-9668

12/ honey bee bakery
 Shannon Adams, a former City Grocery waitress, now makes the best pumpkin-bread breakfast cupcakes, blueberry muffins, and banana-bread cupcakes (with peanut butter icing!) in town. Her classic southern caramel cake is also a winner here. 2305 Jackson Avenue West, Suite 202; 662-236-2490 ■



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