

BEST OF LOUISIANA

35 PLACES AND THINGS TO GO, DO AND SEE FROM ALL OVER THIS GREAT STATE

If your to-do list of "shoulds" is as long as the Atchafalaya River, it's probably time to take a break. As an alternative, we present to you another sort of to-do list. Our editors fussed and fawned for weeks over their favorite places from all over Louisiana to eat, drink, play, stay, shop and take in a little culture. This is of course a mere nibble of the great feast of fun available in every corner of the state, so if your haunts aren't listed, it's because we simply ran out of room. Think of it as a starting point and after you've checked off each one of these priority items, start anew. This is one list we don't mind carrying over to another day. – Melanie Warner Spencer

FOOD

NORTH

Ki Mexico

Shreveport

What began in 2010 as a fresh salsa booth at Shreveport Farmers Market has become one of Shreveport's most talked-about new restaurants, Ki Mexico. Run by brothers Rodrigo and Eleazar Mondragon with assistance in the kitchen from their mother, Lido Villaseñor, Ki Mexico serves an artful take on traditional Mexican favorites like tacos, enchiladas and tortas. The younger Mondragon brother, Eleazar, is a graduate of Le Cordon Bleu in Austin and has a remarkable instinct for embellishing traditional dishes with contemporary flavors — the enchiladas de novia, for example, feature shredded chicken enchiladas topped with a white mole sauce and pomegranate seeds. Save room for dessert; Eleazar's seasonal flan creations are the perfect exclamation point to end a meal at Ki Mexico.

3839 GILBERT DR., SHREVEPORT
318-861-5941
FACEBOOK.COM/KIMEXICO

by Chris Jay
photo by Berg Photography

CENTRAL

Hot Tails

New Roads

The slogan of Hot Tails is, "hardcore south Louisiana cuisine," and it's a sentiment the restaurant lives up to. From the deer and fish decorations, to the walls made from the wood of an old barn, the entire restaurant offers a homey south Louisiana feel. "We have flavors you can't get anywhere else," says co-owner and chef Samantha Carroll who runs the restaurant with her co-chef husband Cody Carroll. "Time and again we're told that the flavor of our seafood and seasoning cannot be surpassed." The menu features fresh Louisiana seafood, rabbit, house-made crawfish boils and a large local draft beer selection. "We have our hands on everything from the ingredients to the seasoning in recipes," says Carroll. "We pride ourselves on making everything in-house, from the boudin, to the artichoke dip. We're not ripping open a bag to boil and serve it."

1113 HOSPITAL RD., NEW ROADS
225-638-4676
HOTTAILSRESTAURANT.COM

by Claire Salinas

CAJUN

La Truffe Sauvage

Lake Charles

Situated in a charming brick cottage surrounded by graceful oaks, the 60-seat La Truffe Sauvage is the epitome of fine dining in Lake Charles. An elegant foyer abundant with fragrant fresh flowers welcomes diners into the intimate, candlelit rooms. Francophile Chef Mohamed Chettouh dazzles the palate with such authentic French classics as creamy lobster bisque topped with a towering pastry dome, soothing duck consommé drizzled with truffle oil, fruit-studded, house-made brioche layered with slivered apples and seared foie gras, mouth-watering tournedos encircled by a pool of silken Madeira sauce, and soufflés as light as air, perfumed with herbs grown outside the picture windows. Live jazz piano accentuates the romantic ambience on Tuesday evenings. Couples raise glasses filled with chilled Veuve Clicquot as they celebrate long into the night.

815 W. BAYOU PINES DRIVE
LAKE CHARLES
337-439-8364
THEWILDTRUFFLE.COM

by Lisa LeBlanc-Berry
photo by Romero & Romero
Photography (previous page)

PLANTATION

City Pork & Brasserie

Baton Rouge

This creative eatery serves pork with panache and down-home food flavored with continental élan. Wild boar flautas with tortillas and smoked avocado cream are perfect for a pre-meal nibble. Lying in a hoagie, smoke-flavored pork belly braised in coffee, served with a side of greens is a rich and splendid meal. Greens, slow-cooked with bacon lardons, pepper jelly, gorgonzola crumbles, or smoked chicken and pepper jelly, add satisfying flavor to any of the entrees. The cheese board offers brie with honey, smoked gouda and aged cheddar cheeses, the charcuterie also features smoked duck breast, andouille and liver pate. Flavor with distinctive flair makes this restaurant a standout in Baton Rouge.

7327 JEFFERSON HIGHWAY
BATON ROUGE
225-915-8880
CITYPORK.COM

by Jeanne Frois

GNO

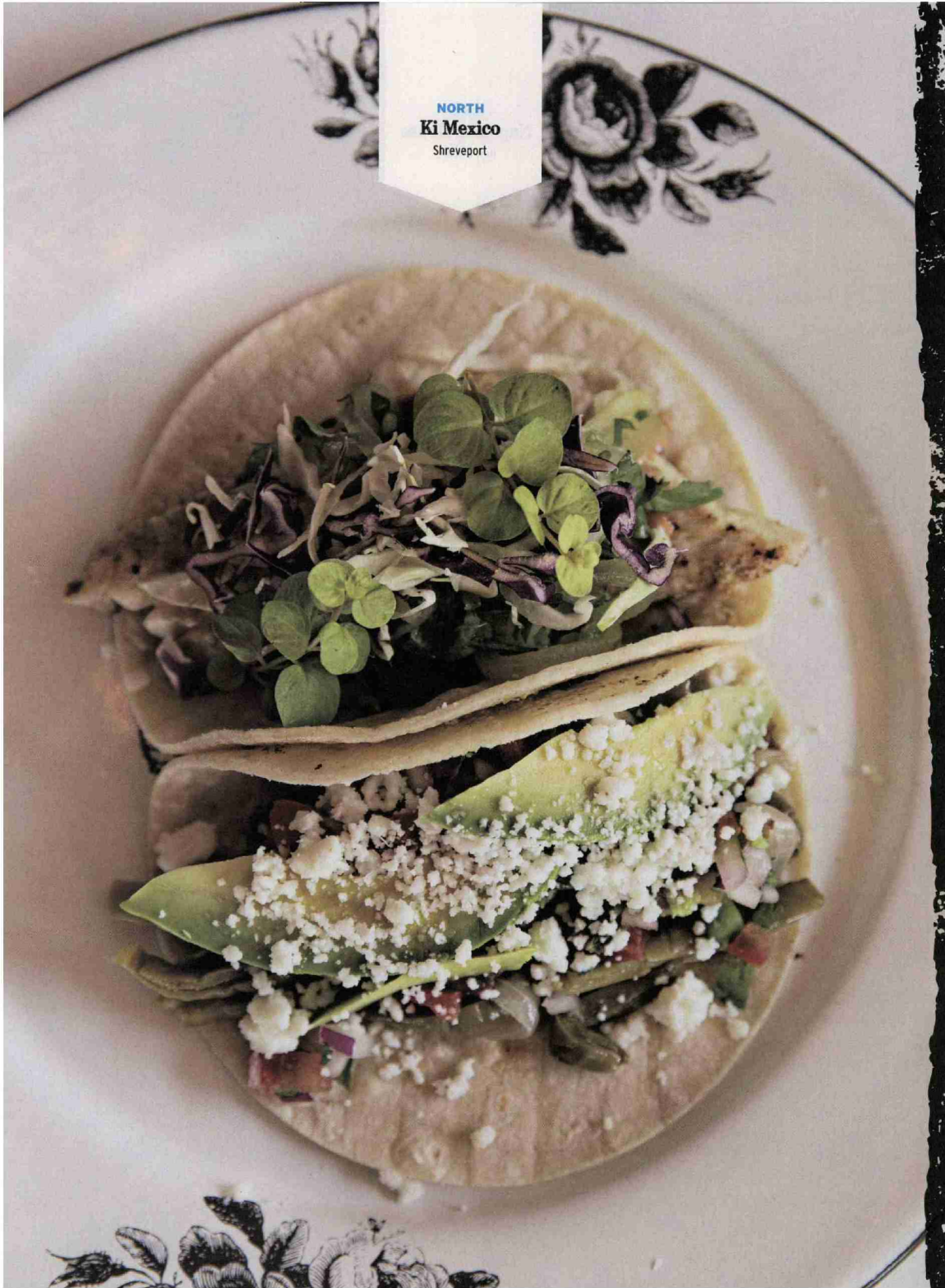
Caribbean Room

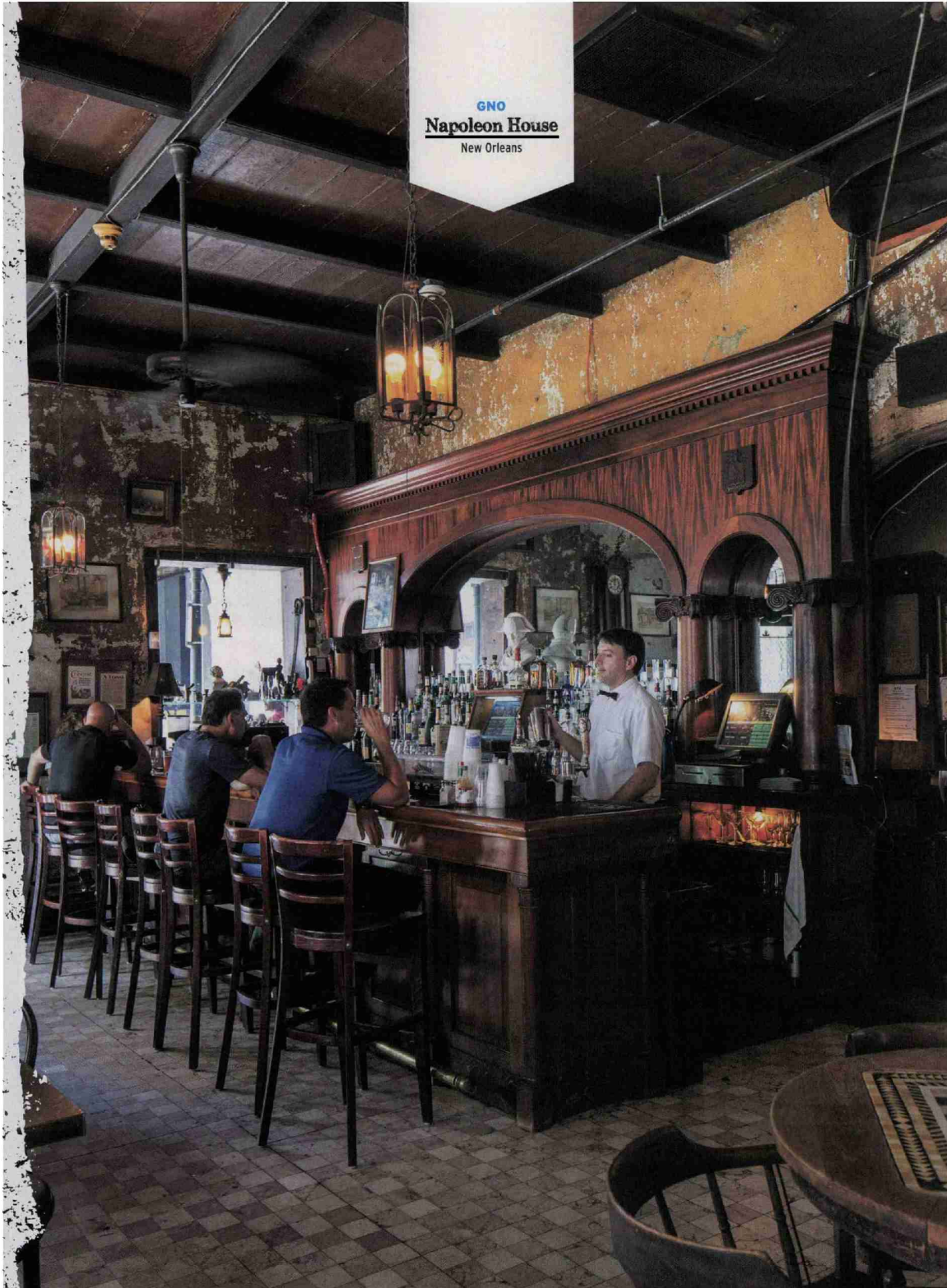
New Orleans

Renowned chef John Besh's latest culinary adventure is the Caribbean Room, part of the renovation and reboot of New Orleans' legendary Pontchartrain Hotel. The tropical-themed dining room features rattan furniture, white tablecloths and a floor decorated with a palm-frond design. Jackets are required for men. The menu features New Orleans classics like seafood gumbo alongside more unconventional dishes like lamb tongue and asparagus salad. Signature entrees include pepper roast lamb chops, filet of beef, American red snapper and a crispy jumbo soft shell crab. If that sounds like a little too much food, the adjacent Bayou Bar offers a great hamburger with hickory sauce and bone marrow. The Silver Whistle Café offers coffee shop fare, including mouthwatering blueberry muffins. After you've finished dining, be sure to visit the Pontchartrain Hotel's rooftop bar, Hot Tin, for a wonderful view.

2031 ST. CHARLES AVE.
NEW ORLEANS
504-206-3114
THEPONTCHARTRAINHOTEL.COM

by Fritz Esker





DRINK

NORTH Great Raft Brewing

Shreveport

Drinking beer ought to be fun. At Great Raft Brewing in Shreveport, owners Andrew and Lindsay Nations have created the kind of experience that is fun, but also sneakily educational. Take a free brewery tour (offered each Saturday at 1, 2 and 3 p.m.) and you may learn the meaning of foeder (a wooden barrel used for long-term fermentation) or how different types of hops affect the flavor of beer. The on-site tasting room always features Great Raft Brewing's three flagship beers as well as seven or eight limited edition brews on tap. Local food trucks selling everything from hot dogs to Hawaiian food gather in the parking lot. Take a seat at the bar, where it's easiest to strike up a conversation with the brewery's certified cicerone staff of beer experts, and let the learning commence.

1251 DALZELL ST.
SHREVEPORT
318-734-9881
GREATRAFTBREWING.COM

by Chris Jay

CENTRAL The Pioneer Pub

Natchitoches

The Pioneer Pub on Front Street is a hometown bar that attracts families during the day and regulars at night. Friendly bartenders, quaint decor and weekly live music performances make it a popular locale for kicking back with a cold one. Patrons rave about the pub's signature dish, the Wookie, a plate of fries topped with brisket, cheese and your choice of jalapeños, onions or tomatoes. The 19 beers on tap are rotated out regularly, and bartenders are always available to educate customers on the various brews. The gumbo and Chicken New Orleans are just a few of the dishes made from scratch. "We try to source local," says general manager Joan Willis. "You get better quality of food and people can tell the difference."

812 WASHINGTON ST.
NATCHITOCHE
318-352-4884

by Claire Salinas

CAJUN Social Southern Table

Lafayette

The team of talented chefs and award-winning bartenders at Social Southern Table and Bar are passionate about their farm-to-table and farm-to-glass creations with a focus on local, seasonal ingredients—they use nearby farmers markets, local distilleries and breweries for their extensive craft-cocktail creations. The sleek bar and charming patio attract sophisticated locals who gather to enjoy expertly made hand-crafted cocktails tied to the seasons, creative specials, a hit parade of old classics and barrel-aged cocktails with a Social Southern twist; The "bee old fashion" is made with small-batch Buffalo Trace Bourbon that has hints of mint and vanilla, blended with a house-made brown sugar simple syrup balanced by bitters, and finished with an orange peel pinched over the drink to bring out the oils. The handsome interior décor is enhanced by old wooden beams and brick, a crackling fireplace on chilly evenings, and ample semi-circular leather booths.

3901 JOHNSTON ST.
LAFAYETTE
337-456-3274
SOCIALSOUTHERN.COM

by Lisa LeBlanc-Berry

PLANTATION Tsunami Restaurant

Baton Rouge

To choose a setting for cocktails that's as intoxicating as whiskey itself only adds joy to the drinking experience. Tsunami Restaurant, its veranda perched on a rooftop overlooking the Mississippi River provides a breathlessly romantic view. Fruit-infused sakes, Japanese whiskies and signature cocktails with unique fusions of flavor are front and center. The Fushimi is a refreshing libation of muddled fresh cucumber; lime sweetened with cucumber syrup; sake and vodka. The classic Japanese Magnolia, made with plum wine and sake, is smoothly sublime. The lights on the Mississippi River Bridge glow against the night sky, only adding to Tsunami's encompassing enchantment.

100 LAFAYETTE ST. 6TH FLOOR
BATON ROUGE
225-346-5100
SERVINGSUSHI.COM

by Jeanne Frois

GNO Napoleon House

New Orleans

Napoleon House wasn't always a bar. Nicholas Girod, a former mayor of New Orleans, owned it and offered it as a place of refuge to Napoleon (yes, the actual general who conquered most of Europe). The plan for Napoleon to spend his exile in the French Quarter never materialized. But, in 1914, the Impastato family bought the property and a few years later, turned it into the beloved watering hole it remains today. It was purchased in 2015 by Ralph Brennan and the kitchen is helmed by executive chef Chris Montero. The bar's signature drink is the Pimm's Cup (Pimm's #1, lemonade, 7-Up, ice, and a cucumber garnish). Patrons enjoy it while listening to classical music and dining on another New Orleans classic, the muffedetta. When they do so, they walk in the footsteps of New Orleans legends like Tennessee Williams and travel back in time to an era when the French Quarter was a neighborhood first and a tourist attraction second.

500 CHARTRES ST.
NEW ORLEANS
504-524-9752
NAPOLEONHOUSE.COM

by Fritz Esker
photo by Jeffery Johnston