

LOCAL FOOD FAN RETURNS TO BOAST THE BESTS



By Jennifer Colosimo



In 2019, the owner of Financial Consultants Group became our favorite kind of hero, because his method for training for a marathon made us all want to be runners ... or at least his training buddies.

With a lot of miles to cover, a carb-loading quest set him out on an adventure to find the best pizza in Forsyth County. Thanks to his tireless taste buds, we now have a vetted list of palatable pies around town, from deep-dish Chicago style to traditional Italian and surprisingly delicious creative concoctions not even on the menu.

He's at it again; this year covering a lot of ground to deliver several bests that our culinary-gifted community serves. Better get hungry.

"You certainly don't need much of a reason to get excited about eating good food!" says Fountain. "I love to uncover the best restaurants, and with the growth in our area there are so many new places to checkout. Food creates an excitement with great flavors and those you shared the experience with. The year 2020 was tough for so many and we believe that food can be the reason for people to order-out or dine-in and be with family and friends — for conversation and creating memories, and even new traditions."

Fountain's Food Adventures may not have a marathon to justify bites this year, but his motivation is just as important. Especially with the hit COVID delivered early last year to the restaurant industry, he's hopeful that kicking off his fun food journey again this year might help local restaurants gain some traction while simultaneously giving people something to look forward to after being at home for so long. People gotta eat!

"The number one goal is to uncover those gems that seem to be scattered throughout our area," he says. "Secondly is bringing good information to our readers to help create more business for the restaurants. Lastly is having fun, eating good food and meeting lots of great people."

That area spans Forsyth, Dawson and Hall counties — three neighborhoods that Fountain loves.

"Forsyth has been home for almost 15 years now and I have loved the family neighborhoods and caring community," says Fountain. "It's organizations like Browns Bridge Church, The Place of Forsyth and our school system that have helped to make our county so special — and continues to attract good people to move here from all over."

"Gainesville provides that hometown feel from the locals with its charming downtown — not to mention being the Chicken Capital of the world is enough on its own," he adds. "And Dawsonville, outside of the busy Ga. 400 corridor, is another locals' community that is made up of good southern charm and a vibrant community."

Any vibrant community includes buzzing potential for creative culinary ventures — too many for one list — and these areas are exploding with talent, creativity, and unique flavors. Fountain kicks off the year with a search for the best brunch, and his tongue-tantalizing trip will continue from there.

"COVID does create some uncertainty and concerns, but we will be mindful of safety as we do our tasting and restaurant reviews, so when our readers are comfortable in venturing out, they will have a lot of great restaurants to visit."

You might just get inspired to try his nods to-go. That's all Fountain could ask for — something that brings people together, no matter how differently they do it.

"I love to see passion put into the quality of the ingredients and the results [that present themselves through] presentation and, most of all, the taste," says Fountain. "This adventure has been a fun and rewarding obsession. The neatest thing is that food is a common language that everyone seems to speak. Like pizza, for example, who doesn't love pizza?"

He's definitely speaking our language, and we can't wait to start talking.

In Hall County, Fountain starts his Food Adventures with the first meal of the day, breakfast and brunch.

"Brunch is probably the best meal hands-down! With so many great additional options, like eggs benedict, stuffed French toast and candied bacon — to shrimp and grits, short rib hash, or my favorite breakfast pizza!"

As David Fountain and his foodie followers set out to explore the local brunch options the adventure quickly began looking and feeling very similar to the challenge that they ran into when searching for Forsyth County's best pizza at the end of 2019 — "it's complicated, but so much to love!"

THE FAVORITE BREAKFAST SPOTS

Community's Favorite Breakfast:

Papa Jack's Country Kitchen (Flowery Branch/South Hall)

On the South-end of the county Papa Jack's is the spot if you are looking for that true Southern comfort country breakfast, a casual homey atmosphere, and a staff with that southern-friendly charm. Without a doubt the biscuits and sausage gravy will bring back those feelings of a home-cooked meal like mama made. The oversized pancakes were delicious and I have to say that their Southern Pride Smoker certainly helped in making their meats, like the bacon and hot links extra yummy! Their restaurant is well suited for a family sit-down or the drive-thru is ideal for those getting it to go.

Papa Jack's certainly met all of our requirements for being a Favorite choice, but their kindness and interest in the community is what really makes them so special. The give-back mentality of owner Bill Mays is felt throughout our community. Like his involvement with the Eagle Ranch organization, who provides a Christ-centered home, education and counseling for boys and girls.

Favorite Country Breakfast

Loretta's Country Kitchen (Oakwood/Mundy Mill)

Now if you have not been to Loretta's, it's worth a trip. Their slogan reads "Where it's all good!!" We confirmed that on our visit. They have all the country classics, biscuits,

country fried steak, pancakes, oatmeal and more. They have cozy, subtle flavors for most of their food choices, but if you want something that stands out, the Cinnamon roll is a must. They are tall and airy with a simple cinnamon taste, and a perfect amount of warm icing on top. The sausage gravy and biscuits sang home-cooked comfort, while David loved the exceptionally large fluffy pancakes, with a few slices of great tasting bacon. Overall, Loretta's has a friendly atmosphere, and a staff that cares.

Favorite Homestyle Breakfast

Longstreet Café (Riverside Terrace or Pearl Nix Pkwy)

A community staple for some of that good ol' home cookin'. For over two decades, Longstreet has given the locals fresh, made-from-scratch meals and some of the best fried chicken. David found this true when he combined the chicken and egg on a cathead biscuit, a perfect blend of southern goodness. A stack of their pancakes or French toast with red hot sausage is another way to complete the hearty meal. As they say, "We put the home in the cooking!" with two convenient locations and a drive-thru for your take-out needs.

Favorite Drive-Thru Breakfast

Stan's Biscuit Shop and Deli (Thompson Bridge Road)

When you are looking to explore the flavors from another country-style kitchen, Stan's would be our choice. Their homemade large flaky biscuits were tasty, and very satisfying when topped with sausage gravy. A bacon, egg and cheese might be a better option if you're eating on the go. We found their attention to detail will keep their patrons coming time and time again.

Favorite Mexican Breakfast

Haydee's Café (Atlanta Hwy & Mundy Mill)

If you are like our foodie, Kali, and love the authentic Mexican flavors, Haydee's Café is a great choice. Not only is everything made in house, but Haydee the co-owner, brings to our town her grandmothers' recipes from Mexico. We tried the Chilaquiles, an Omelet and the Molletes. Kali's favorite was the Chilaquiles; the fried tortilla, green sauce and refried beans flavors blended perfectly together.

The Omelet Americano was savory with ham and cheese, and delivered a familiar and satisfying taste for David. The Molletes was also another good choice, an open-faced sandwich with re-fried beans, jalapeño, jack cheese and topped with choice of chorizo or steak. We are thrilled and excited for Haydee and her husband Luis Sepulveda, as they close in on their 5th anniversary of serving great Mexican food.

Favorite Coffee-Shop Breakfast

Inman Perk Coffee (Downtown Gainesville)

Coffee counts as breakfast, right? Even if it doesn't, it is a huge part of breakfast for many. Inman Perk Coffee is where you can go to find amazing coffee, tea, a pastry or lite sandwich too. We experienced something new here, a Waffle Biscuit. It was flaky like a biscuit but sweet like a waffle, that paired well with honey or syrup. We also enjoyed the breakfast burrito; one of the healthier options. A spinach tortilla stuffed with egg whites, cheese, and sausage, for a delicious blend of flavors. Inman Perk Coffee shows love through their menu and the community by the extra steps and commitment that they take to help the environment.

THE LOVE FOR BRUNCH

Brunch is a long-standing Southern tradition that brings a fun, sociable aspect to this special weekend meal. Way back in 1895 a British author Guy Beringer was making the case for a post-church Sunday meal, and pushed the words "breakfast" and "lunch" together to form "brunch." Well Mary and her good friend Mimosa might have had a little something more to do with it too. They confirmed, brunch is not a Monday-through-Friday event.

During the week before noon you're eating breakfast or after noon it's lunch. At breakfast, it's realistically all about COFFEE, tea or OJ — and something that's relatively quick and easy. Once the Mimosas, Bellinis or Bloody Marys come out then it begins an experience and time to relax for a little indulgence (or a lot).

Best Overall Brunch

Avocado's (Downtown Gainesville)

Located in the Historic Gainesville Square you will find the cozy and eclectic atmosphere of Avocado's the dream of owner and executive chef Albert Lunalover. The Sunday Brunch is highlighted with a buffet of home-made biscuits and gravy, blue corn grits, colorful frittata, fried chicken, breakfast potatoes, fried mushrooms, fried fish, fresh fruit and more.

Also included were some of our favorites, like their tasty cinnamon biscuits, made-to-order omelet, pancakes with bacon and pecans, traditional eggs Benedict or eggs done your way. This is an all you can eat; so relax and help yourself to one of the signature Mimosas with house cueve, peach schnapps and OJ. We found Avocado's to have a fun environment, great food and

personal attention to service that we appreciate.

Favorite Holiday Brunch

Scott's Downtown (Downtown Gainesville)

This is our hands down favorite spot for that extra special celebration or holiday get-together. Owner and Chef, Scott Dixon, has created quite a delectable menu, "Excellence in Every Element" with a commitment to exceptional food quality, preparation, and presentation.

The restaurant is exceptionally beautiful, charming and a perfect space to host a brunch which is only offered during special holidays like Mother's Day or through their catering events. But what you will find is their Brunch Stations are amazing. From an Omelet Station to the amazing Cold Seafood Display. The array of choices is incredible.

The carved roasted prime rib of beef is juicy and tender with au jus and creamy horseradish sauce. Along with one of their Eggs Benedicts like the Maryland Crab Cake with perfectly poached eggs on top of their delicious crab cakes served on buttery English muffins with Canadian bacon and house-made hollandaise sauce. Or Scott's signature French toast, Bananas Foster with walnuts and a rum foster syrup. A cold seafood display of tender Gulf shrimp steamed, ready to peel & eat, oysters on the half shell and crab claws. Soup and salad and not to mention the also available entrees and assorted desserts. So, make plans to attend an upcoming holiday brunch at Scott's Downtown, or Kay Dixon, Scott's wife can create your own special event so you can enjoy their exquisite cuisine and outstanding service.

Locals Favorite Brunch

2 Dog Restaurant (Downtown Gainesville)

Just outside the square of downtown Gainesville you will find this neat little restaurant that opened its doors in 1997 the dream of Tim and Tina Roberts — to offer quality food in their hometown. We would love to talk about their brunch menu, but the effects of the pandemic and Covid has created extra strain on the restaurant. Being a scratch kitchen, it takes extra skilled cooks and staff to prepare for a brunch menu, along with the coordination of fresh ingredients. With these setbacks 2 Dog had to stop offering Brunch, which is disappointing because items like the Cowboy Hangover Cure and 2 Dog Pork Benedict will be missed by many people like David. But we are still excited for their lunch and dinner menus.

WORTH THE DRIVE

Most Romantic Brunch

Montaluce Winery & Restaurant (Dahlonega mountains)

We found Montaluce to be the fabulous choice for those of you that are looking for the perfect place to get away from the hustle and bustle to be able to celebrate a special milestone or to create a memorable occasion. Known for their first-class Tuscan winery and accompanied with an award-winning restaurant, Le Vigne, is perched on top of the winery and nestled in the mountains of North Georgia. Executive Chef, Christopher Matson and his team create everything fresh on-site all locally-sourced offerings and farm-to-table principals. While the menus are seasonal, we found several favorites. Like the flavorful and pleasant Pasta Bolognese, with fresh pasta, shredded parmesan, filet meat sauce and crushed red pepper. Or the Tonga Toast, fried banana stuffed French toast, cinnamon sugar, strawberry jam, maple syrup and serving of steel-cut oatmeal. The Wagyu flank steak, fried egg, peppercorn demi and arugula salad or the Duck Confit Gravy covering house-made buttermilk biscuits were a couple of other treats. Grab a glass of one of their Sunday Bubbles and take in the panoramic breathtaking views of the North Georgia Mountains that compliments this southern hospitality experience. The perfect place to relax and celebrate with the ones you love.

THE MONTHLY FOOD ADVENTURE CONTINUES: *Eating with a Healthy Twist. As you read this David and fellow foodies like you are already looking and tasting those healthier menu items, whether that may help with a New Years Resolution or just balance out some of those eating habits. We will need your help with this adventure exploring Low-fat, Gluten-free, Dairy-free, non-GMO, Anti-sugar, Farm-to-table or Celiac sensitive kitchens. So please chime in and let us know of those dishes that work for you or the areas that we can help you uncover better choices.*



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