

Earlier this year, we asked you to vote for the best food destinations in the South. Now that a whopping 500,000 votes have been cast, Senior Editor Paula Disbrowe weighs in on the surprising winner and nine other destinations with amazing hometown flavor. Dig in!

WINNER

Lafayette, LA CAYENNE-SPIKED ACADIANA

It was clear from the get-go: Lafayette, Louisiana, was a force to be reckoned with. The little town of 221,000 rallied their enthusiastic eaters to "Geaux vote!" Lafayette's distinct culinary identity as the capital of Cajun country, its spicy, sausage-laden roots, and a new generation of locals devoted to preserving their heritage while putting a fresh spin on tradition have made it an incredibly satisfying place to eat. "There's a proud appreciation of Cajun culture that's reflected

in our cooking. Parents are teaching their kids French, and there's a booming Acadiana music scene," says Justin Girouard, a native who returned home (with wife Margaret) after working in restaurants in New Orleans (including Scott Boswell's Stella) to open The French Press, where they serve Cajun Benedict and Grits and Grillades. There are flourishes on their menu, but it's grounded in authentic flavors. "Here, you've got to remain true to your grandma."



