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COUNTRY DOG

THE SOUTH'S BEST NEW
OYSTER BARS

ON THE HUNT IN
THE CHESAPEAKE

GARDEN & GUN

Southern

HOLIDAYS

SOUL of the SOUTH

DECEMBER 2024 /
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MERRY MERRY!



**THE ULTIMATE
GIFT GUIDE**

P. 64

FESTIVE DRINKS, TROPICAL TRADITIONS,
and ENTERTAINING SECRETS

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with this hot
gin punch.

15th
**ANNUAL
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THE SOUTH
AWARDS**

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The Southern Agenda

GOINGS-ON IN THE SOUTH & BEYOND



★
Editors' Choice

HOLIDAYS

See Gnome City

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN, GEORGIA

Even on a clear day, it's tricky to "See Seven States" (as a marker encourages) from Rock City Gardens atop Lookout Mountain, just outside Chattanooga. But after dark, from November 15 through January 4, it's nigh impossible to miss the millions of glowing bulbs that make up the park's Enchanted Garden of Lights, which marks thirty years this season. "There are now grandchildren here with their grandparents, who came when *they*



canvases, some from his program, *The Joy of Painting*. Last year, seventy-six other Ross oil paintings, then the largest number of his works ever exhibited, attracted eleven thousand visitors from as far away as Australia. “People told us he changed their lives,” says Sheila Martin, executive director of the university’s Dunn Center. “The stories were just unbelievable, how they loved this man.” This time, the center will also stream Ross’s shows, host painting classes, and stage a Bob Ross musical. The landscapes and seascapes—the artist’s specialties—are on loan without cost from Bob Ross Inc. Joan Kowalski, whose parents started the business with Ross, says he was as kind and goofy as he appeared during the show’s thirty-one complete seasons (he died just before production of the thirty-second). “He knew that he was sort of a country boy, and he was in on the joke, too.”

■ ncwu.edu

FOOD

South Carolina

CASSEROLE
ROYALTY

During the holiday season, more than thirty thousand quarts of food travel from Wade’s Restaurant in Spartanburg to families’ tables, and that’s in addition to the eatery’s regular dine-in and to-go service. Since the meat-and-three mainstay opened seventy-seven years ago, its gravy-laden turkey, cornbread dressing, marshmallow-topped sweet potato soufflé, and the fan-favorite yeast rolls have been fixtures at customers’ Thanksgiv-

Flingin’ Fruitcakes

After the holidays, have your cake and maybe toss it, too

By Danielle Wallace

Few desserts have more polarizing power than fruitcake. Both loved and loathed, the sticky concoction of dried fruits, nuts, and often alcohol has been around for centuries—fitting, as it’s perhaps best known for its lengthy shelf life (one family in Michigan has held on to a fruitcake made by an ancestor—for 141 years).

Although fruitcake lineage can be traced to ancient Rome, its popularity grew in the United States with the introduction of the Rural Free Delivery and parcel post service in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Collin Street Bakery in Corsicana, Texas, founded in 1896, capitalized on this and became the country’s first mail-order fruitcake company. These days, the bakery’s pecan-studded desserts, tucked in red tins, are still a popular holiday gift.

Fans and haters alike may find common ground at the Great Fruitcake Toss in Manitou Springs, Colorado. Each January, competitors fling the stuff from slingshots or catapults or by hand, competing for accuracy, distance, and balance and in the “basketcake” category (tossing a fruitcake into a basket). Between heats, Collin Street Bakery provides samples (for eating, that is).



ings and Christmases, especially for those who have sneakily claimed the famous casseroles as their own. Despite the consistent love from loyalists across the region, Wade Lindsey III and Anna Lindsey Liles, the brother-and-sister duo at the helm, were shocked when they received an email from the James Beard Foundation naming their family restaurant a 2024 America’s Classics honoree. “We didn’t even believe it and deleted the initial email,” Wade says. “It wasn’t until they kept trying to contact us that we finally realized it was real.” They accepted the award in Chicago alongside their lead cooks, Sonya Hunter and Ray Pearson, who have worked in the Wade’s kitchen for nearly three decades. “We hear that we are the first stop home after a student is away at college, or the comforting meal requested during a stay at the hospital, or a Sunday lunch tradition for the entire family,” Anna says. “We know we are still doing something right.”

■ eatatwades.com

ANTIQUES

Tennessee

GARDEN
AND GOODS

Every year since 1991, antique dealer David Lindquist has packed a truck to haul hundreds of items from his shop, Whitehall Antiques, in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, to the Antiques and Garden Show of Nashville (January 31–February 2). The huge gathering combines botanical fantasy and classic design, he says. “It’s my absolute favorite show of all time.” This year’s highlights include a keynote lecture by actress and author Brooke Shields, along with her longtime collaborator, the British decorator David Flint Wood. Interior designer April Tomlin will also appear with two of her celebrity clients: musician Sheryl Crow and Lauren Akins, the wife of country star Thomas Rhett. The charity event has grown to include more than 150 dealers and 16,000 annual attendees. Designer Elizabeth Lawrence, who serves as honorary cohost with her business partner, Bunny Williams, says she always takes time to wander the show and drink it all in: “It’s an eclectic mix. There are great garden things. There’s beautiful furniture.

There's modern art. There's always something gorgeous."

■ antiquesandgardenshow.com

OPENINGS

Texas

METEORIC RISE

Houston's soon-to-open **Hotel Saint Augustine** is rooted in dualities—old meets new, contemporary meets classical, a mirror of both the city and the surrounding Montrose neighborhood. In some respects, *Perseid*, the Bunkhouse Hotels group's on-site bistro helmed by the lauded chef Aaron Bludorn, is no different, although its roots are arguably far more tangled. After Bludorn moved to Houston in 2019 following stints in California and New York, he found a Gulf Coast culinary scene drawing inspiration from far-flung influences including West African, Creole, and Vietnamese. That same sensibility now infuses *Perseid*, Bludorn's fourth restaurant in Space City, where duck frites, dressed with mango and sauce au poivre, might appear alongside fried squash blossoms stuffed with jambalaya. Still, Bludorn notes, while *Perseid* and Hotel Saint Augustine are very much products of Houston, they have universal appeal. "At the end of the day," Bludorn says, "we're all people just hanging out together, enjoying good food, enjoying the fruits of the season."

■ bunkhousehotels.com

SPORTING

Virginia

FLY-TYING ONE ON

At the Virginia Fly Fishing and Wine Festival (January 10–11), learning how to roll cast or tie a blood knot is about as intimidating as a glass of buttery chardonnay. "It doesn't matter if you don't know a fly rod from a buggy whip, or if you've been fly fishing for twenty years and want to go to the Amazon," says festival organizer and fly-fishing author Beau Beasley. "We have instructors for every level of experience." And vendors that range from Alaskan lodges to sporting artists to guides for

local Virginia waters. Held indoors at the Meadow Event Park in Doswell, just north of Richmond, the festival happens rain or shine. A ticket gets you access to every vendor; tastings from nine wineries, three distilleries, and a brewery; and a spot in more fly-casting, fly-tying, and fly-fishing classes than you could possibly attend.

■ vafllyfishingfestival.com

DRINKS

West Virginia

CHEERS
TO A LEGEND

When Parkersburg's **North End Tavern** opened in 1899, it served shift workers and tradesmen, and quickly built a reputation as a rough-and-tumble watering hole. But West Virginia's oldest bar (as far as they can tell—give them a holler if your establishment is older) and restaurant evolved over the decades. Now celebrating its 125th anniversary, the NET, as it's called, operates as a brewery, distillery, and family restaurant known for German pub food and burgers made from local beef. "You can say it's an institution," says Tom Joyce, the city's mayor, who has been dining there since childhood. Tavern owner Joe Roedersheimer purchased the bar in 1978 and expanded almost twenty years later, opening one of the state's first craft breweries in 1997. "I figured I've already got a beer joint, I might as well add a brewery," he remembers. The Roedy's Red, an American amber ale named after him, remains its bestseller. Roedersheimer sees no reason the bar won't be around another 125 years: "Our beer's always good and cold. We make one heck of a good Reuben. We keep it simple, but we keep it consistent."

■ netbrewery.com

—Larry Bleiberg, Gabriela Gomez-Misserian, Jordan P. Hickey, Rachael Maddux, T. Edward Nickens, Lia Picard, and Trudy Saunders

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