



# Eats and Beats *in Franklin*

Live music and Southern cuisine reign supreme in this Tennessee town full of life. By Julia Sayers



Photo by Debbie Smartt



Just south of Nashville, you'll find Franklin, Tennessee, a town with a rich history and a vibe of its own. Although Franklin is only 14 miles from Nashville, it's far removed from the honky-tonks and busy urban life of Music City. Instead, what you'll find in Franklin is a quintessential American Main Street. Stroll down the brick sidewalks of the 16-block historic downtown, and you'll find antique shops, gift stores, art galleries, an old-fashioned theater, and maybe even a guitar-playing fellow serenading passersby.

But what also stands out about Franklin is the food. With a wide range of locally owned restaurants in the downtown

area, you'll find everything from perfectly smoked barbecue to spicy Cajun food to fresh seafood (yes, fresh).

Even though the cuisines may be completely different, there's a similar theme that runs through a number of Franklin's restaurants—live music. Many of the eateries have stages that regularly host live performances, whether it be in a combination grocery store and restaurant or in a 3-story Victorian building that was once a landmark pharmacy. It's not uncommon to find some of Nashville's biggest stars jamming out in Franklin. So while Franklin has its own identity, being close to Nashville has added a beat to this already hopping town.





Photos by Amy Whidby



## Come for the Food, Stay for the Music

### Puckett's Grocery & Restaurant

If there's one restaurant that defines what Franklin is all about, it's Puckett's Grocery & Restaurant. Known as a community kitchen, Puckett's is where folks gather to enjoy Southern comfort food, socialize with each other, and listen to live music. The atmosphere at Puckett's is nostalgic; antique signs around the room and shelves of groceries lining the walls are reminiscent of an earlier time and the original roots of Puckett's Grocery.

Founded by the Puckett family in the 1950s, Puckett's Grocery was a little country market serving the small town of Leiper's Fork, Tennessee. In the mid-1990s, Andy Marshall, an entrepreneur

in the grocery business, had a vision for a small grocery store that could also offer home-cooked family recipes to the community. He sold the Piggly Wiggly stores he currently owned and purchased Puckett's in 1998. Marshall found that more and more customers were asking for the home-cooked meals, so he decided to add his own flair to Puckett's staples and throw in some favorite Southern dishes of his own.

In 2004, Marshall was given the opportunity to open a second location in downtown Franklin. With this new venture, he was able to tailor the Franklin space to be more of a restaurant and live music venue. If you visit Puckett's, you'll find an extensive menu of down-home cuisine and a stage that has played host to stars such as Kenny Rogers and Lady Antebellum.

On the menu, Marshall adds Southern flair to classic dishes, such as Bubba's Benedict—fluffy biscuits topped with bacon or sau-

sage, eggs, and pepper gravy—or Grilled Atlantic Salmon brushed with a moonshine glaze. But what Puckett's is really known for is the barbecue. Marshall, who is also a competition pitmaster, smokes chicken, pork, and ribs over cherry wood in a slow-and-low cooking process. The cherry imparts a sweeter, richer flavor than hickory or mesquite. After the meat has smoked for eight to 10 hours, Marshall wraps it in plastic wrap and places it in a warmer for another 10 hours. This process mimics the French sous vide process, which allows the meats to remain juicy with a deep, savory flavor. The barbecue plays a prominent part in the menu, from sliders to platters to nachos. You'll even find pulled pork for breakfast atop sweet potato pancakes in the Southern Stack. So if you're looking to taste some feel-good Southern food while enjoying the best of the local music scene, Puckett's Grocery & Restaurant is your go-to place.



Photo by Amy Whidby

## A Fish Tale

In 2012, Andy Marshall opened a second restaurant in Franklin—Puckett's Boat House, a grill and oyster bar that is also a live music venue. The family-owned restaurant features dishes reminiscent of the Gulf Coast and New Orleans, using fresh seafood brought in from Florida four to six times a week. Enjoy a range of seafood varieties, such as Apalachicola oysters, Shrimp & Grits Hush Puppies, and Beer-Battered Cod, and dip them in homemade cocktail, tartar, and zest sauces.



Photo by Amy Whidby

## A Flavorful, Family Tradition

### Papa Boudreaux's Cajun Café

Strolling along Main Street, you'll find a little restaurant with a crawfish on the window and Mardi Gras colors on the walls: Papa Boudreaux's. The Cajun café is small, seating only about 30 at a time, but the flavors are big, bold, and authentic.

Owned by Guy and Brad Bader, Papa Boudreaux's is the Franklin incarnation of their father's restaurant, the original Papa Boudreaux's in Santa Fe, Tennessee. The Franklin location opened in April 2011, and Guy and Brad utilize their dad's recipes influenced by his southern Louisiana heritage. Everything is made from scratch, and the boys have put their own spin on the recipes. For example, Guy doesn't enjoy excessively spicy food, so he's taken the recipes and experimented with them to keep the flavor but reduce the heat. Of

course, you'll still be able to find dishes that are kept spicy because they're designed that way, but if the heat just isn't for you, you have a variety of choices.

The gumbo at Papa Boudreaux's rivals any found along the bayou. Their signature gumbo features andouille sausage, okra, rice, and shrimp in a dark roux with layers of deep flavor and a hint of heat. The Gumbo Eilee is packed with seafood, including shrimp, crawfish, crab, and oysters, which add another element of flavor. You'll also find jambalaya, étouffée, red beans and rice, barbecue shrimp, and fresh fish specials.

Guy and Brad work hard to keep an updated and ever-changing menu for their customers, aiming to have a new recipe every other month. Tennessee isn't normally the place that comes to mind when you think of quality Cajun food, but each dish showcases traditional Louisiana cuisine and is some of the best you'll find in the state. Even if you have to wait to grab a spot at one of the tables, you know it will be worth it.





## Something Old, Something New

### Gray's on Main

-----

A larger-than-life sign with the name Gray's on it hangs from a brick building announcing Gray's on Main restaurant. If you think it looks like the sign for an old pharmacy, you're exactly right. The Victorian building, circa 1876, once housed a landmark pharmacy that was the center of activity in Franklin for more than a century. Today, it's a center of activity as a trendy restaurant and brandy bar, as well as a live music venue.

Gray's on Main opened in August 2013, after co-owners Joni and Michael Cole restored the 3-story building that had been left vacant for 85 years. Michael used the history of the

building to revitalize the structure by keeping the original wood floors, tin ceilings, and the 100-year-old door. The tables were built from the building's original wood, and Gray Drug Co. memorabilia can be found throughout the restaurant.

The food at Gray's on Main puts a modern spin on Southern classics. At the root of Gray's is the Southern tradition of social hour, which promotes shared dishes and large-batch cocktails. A favorite dish to share (although you might not want to) is the Fried Pimiento Cheese. Homemade

pimiento cheese is rolled in bread crumbs and fried and placed atop a moonshine pepper jelly. The result is a crispy exterior and a melty, cheesy inside. Gray's also makes it easy to share your Shrimp & Grits by presenting individual smoked Cheddar grits cakes, topped with Cajun-spiced shrimp and a mustard beurre blanc served over collard greens. Of course, you can order your own entrée as well, with selections such as Braised Rabbit Pasta, Chicken Pot Pie, and Double Bone Bourbon Chop.

Not to be outdone by the food, Gray's happens to have the largest brandy selection in the country, and the bartenders go through rigorous training to create brandy-based libations. All juices, bitters, simple syrups, and even tonic water are made in-house. Order the Anthem Spirit, the signature cocktail.

You can sip on one of the cocktails while listening to live music in the third-floor music room. An elevated stage, hand-built by Michael Cole, and brick walls lend dynamic acoustics to featured bands. From blues to folk to indie rock, Gray's hosts a variety of artists and has breathed new life into an important piece of Franklin's history.



Food photos by Matt Mullins

### *Food Tour by Foot*

If you really want to get a taste of what Franklin has to offer, you can take a food tour with Franklin on Foot. You'll enjoy popular dishes at six local restaurants on the 3-hour walking tour, and you'll learn about the history of Franklin. It's fun, educational, and a great way to experience multiple eateries when you can't pick just one. Learn more at [franklinonfoot.com/foodtours.htm](http://franklinonfoot.com/foodtours.htm).