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GUIDE

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palate

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LUCILLE'S,
HOUSTON



Pancakes
at Lucy's.

Auburn

ALABAMA



From game day haunts to Charles Barkley sightings, Auburn chef David Bancroft (of Acre and Bow & Arrow) plots a tour of Tiger country.

As told to
Lia Grabowski

Pancakes Aplenty

My wife [Cristin] and I, we like to take our children to **Lucy's** for brunch. It's a beautiful, quaint spot that's just outside the edge of downtown Auburn, so it's a little bit of an escape. And it's really nice and clean and chic—a fun, energetic spot for Sunday brunch. And they have humongous plate-size pancakes and my kids love them. I'm kind of a pancake guy and at one point my kids were like, "These are just better than yours."

Worth the Wait

If you're in Auburn, you have to get lunch at **Irritable Bao**. I know it sounds funny but that's because my friend Whitley Dykes is funny. He was on a mission trip and met his now-wife [Kunyu Li] in China and they got married and moved back to Auburn, and now they run Irritable Bao. They do every type of filling that you could imagine and there is a line every single day—like a Franklin Barbecue-style line—and it's quickly become an Auburn tradition. Whitley is out there like the mic man. He's in the street running up and down this line, telling everybody what's on the menu. He posts pictures with the crowd every day. It's just the thing to do, get your picture taken waiting in line.

Just Don't Call It Tex-Mex

I don't want to be that snobby guy coming in with his own places, but I mean, if it's game day, you've got to go to **Bow & Arrow**. I grew up in San Antonio, so it is Hill Country-style barbecue—big plates of brisket and all that—but we also make tortillas in-house. We take all of the barbecue and the brisket and we roll it into fresh enchiladas and tacos. So, it is Texas through and through. It's not Tex-Mex, it is definitely like barbecue-Mexican.

In the Great Outdoors

If you're looking for an activity, check out **Chewacla State Park**. It's 700 acres and there's an amazing biking course; it's got a little lake in there, you can hike, but it's literally ten minutes from downtown. Like, you can be downtown throwing toilet paper on Toomer's Corner, drive ten minutes and be at this amazing state park. Or I would golf at the **Auburn University Club**. We have, I think like ten or eleven golf courses in Auburn, it's like a golf trail. But my friend who played football for Auburn went on to play for the Seahawks and the Saints, Will Herring, bought and redeveloped the course. And I'd love to say it was an easy course but it's not. It's challenging, difficult, but it's beautiful.

Star Spotting

If you want to meet Charles Barkley, there's a good chance you'll see him at **Hamilton's**. It is an Auburn staple that's right downtown by Toomer's. Even the other day, I was cooking at Jason Dufner's house—our local PGA champion—and I'm cooking for Jason and some of the old Auburn players were there—and we're having a blast, and the whole party got shut down because Charles Barkley showed up. Everybody just pushed the food aside. I was, like, right in the middle of delivering my speech about this amazing Australian wagyu beef that I just brought in and the whole party stopped. While he was there, I asked him, "How come you don't come to Acre all that often?" "Because I'm just a Hamilton's guy, Dave." You know, because they've been giving him free drinks for like twenty years.

Settle Your Sweet Tooth

You have to have the peanut butter pie at **Acre**. It's my mama Jean's recipe that I jazzed up a little bit so it's an icebox peanut butter pie. Instead of rolling a chocolate truffle out in your hand, we pour a layer of chocolate truffle at the bottom of the pie crust, and then we pour deep-dish peanut butter mousse in it and chill it. And then on top, we torch banana merengue. So, you get this kind of Fat Elvis—chocolate, peanut butter, bananas.

War Eagle

If you are ready for party time, like it's game day and you want to immerse yourself in the college atmosphere, you've got to go to the **Southeastern**. That's my friend Jon Hyink. He built a huge college bar loaded full of game-day goers, all college students, you know, the kind of place I'm not allowed to go to.

On the Down-Low

I don't want to call out the fact that I go some-

where else for barbecue, but I go to **Byron's Smokehouse**. It's in an old Dairy Queen that turned into a barbecue spot years ago led by Glen Gullede and it is the place to go if you want to see every old man in Auburn. I love going there for breakfast. They do crispy fried potatoes, bacon, eggs, sausages, and all that. There's no way that you can go to Byron's for breakfast and not see somebody you know. It's a local staple.

Sister, Sister

Auburn has a sister city, **Opelika**. It has a beautiful, quaint downtown. It's artsy and historical. There are so many little spots that you can hit all in the same area, you can park and just get out and walk. They have three or four brunch spots, shops, ice cream parlors. It's a fun little escape maybe fifteen minutes from Auburn. There's a distillery there—**John Emerald Distilling Company**—jewelry makers and leather craftspeople, furniture makers—a lot of focus on heirloom goods. It's a city all about preservation.

A Good Night's Sleep

The Hotel at Auburn University is the main hotel downtown and the rooms are so nice. They have a wonderful conference center and a restaurant, **Ariccia**, attached that does everything from brunch all the way through supper. Their lounge area, **Piccolo**, is beautiful. Or there's **the Collegiate Hotel**. It's a fairly new hotel, a couple years old. They have a sunset balcony where you can overlook Stanford Hall, see the stadium. It's unbelievable.

From top: Opelika; Ariccia. Opposite from top: Quinn's on the Beach; Sails Restaurant

