

Best Restaurants in Nashville: 20 Must-Try Places for Every Budget (2026 Guide)



If you are visiting Nashville for the first time, you will quickly discover that the city's food scene is just as memorable as its live music. While Nashville Hot Chicken may be the dish that made Music City famous, there is far more waiting beyond the spicy fried chicken. Award-winning barbecue joints, historic Southern meat-and-three restaurants, elegant steakhouses, chef-driven fine dining, neighborhood brunch cafés, and international flavors have transformed Nashville into one of the country's fastest-growing culinary destinations.

Whether you are looking for an affordable local favorite, planning a romantic dinner, feeding the whole family, or celebrating a special occasion, choosing where to eat can feel overwhelming with hundreds of excellent restaurants spread across the city. This guide narrows down the best restaurants in Nashville by combining iconic institutions with local favorites that consistently deliver exceptional food,

atmosphere, and value. From classic Southern comfort food to upscale dining experiences, these restaurants deserve a place on every Nashville itinerary.

Nashville Restaurant Guide at a Glance

Quick Fact		Details
Best For		Food lovers, couples, families & first-time visitors
Average Meal Cost		\$15 to \$30 (Casual) • \$40 to \$100+ (Fine Dining)
Must-Try Food	Local	Nashville Hot Chicken, Tennessee BBQ, Meat-and-Three, Southern Biscuits & Banana Pudding
Top Neighborhoods	Food	Downtown, The Gulch, Germantown, East Nashville & 12 South
Don't Miss		Prince's Hot Chicken, Martin's Bar-B-Que, Loveless Cafe & Arnold's Country Kitchen
Best Time to Visit		Spring (April-May) & Fall (September-October) for outdoor dining
Reservations		Recommended for fine dining and weekend dinners

Getting Around

Downtown is walkable, but a car or rideshare is best for exploring multiple neighborhoods

Best Restaurants in Nashville

Nashville's restaurant scene offers something for every taste and budget. Some restaurants have been serving locals for decades, while others are nationally recognized destinations led by award-winning chefs. The recommendations below combine Nashville's iconic dining institutions with modern favorites that showcase why Music City has become one of [*America's top destinations*](#) known for their foods.

Best Nashville Classics

1. Prince's Hot Chicken Shack

- **Google Rating:** Highly Rated (4.5+/5)
- **Location:** 5814 Nolensville Pike, Nashville, TN
- **Best For:** First-time visitors, authentic Nashville Hot Chicken
- **Signature Dish:** Original Nashville Hot Chicken
- **Best Time to Visit:** Weekday lunch or early dinner

No restaurant is more closely tied to Nashville's culinary identity than Prince's Hot Chicken Shack. Widely recognized as the birthplace of Nashville Hot Chicken, Prince's has been serving its legendary spicy fried chicken for decades using the original family recipe that inspired countless imitators across the country. Every piece is cooked fresh to order and coated in a signature cayenne-based seasoning that delivers both intense heat and rich flavor.

If you are looking for the authentic Nashville Hot Chicken experience, this is where your food tour should begin.

 **Local Tip:** Unless you regularly eat very spicy food, order the **Mild** or **Medium** heat level. The hotter options are significantly spicier than most visitors expect.

2. Hattie B's Hot Chicken

- **Google Rating:** Highly Rated (4.5+/5)
- **Location:** Multiple locations across Nashville
- **Best For:** Families, first-time visitors, casual dining
- **Signature Dish:** Hot Chicken Plate with Southern Sides
- **Best Time to Visit:** Before noon or after 2:00 PM

Hattie B's has helped introduce Nashville Hot Chicken to visitors from around the world. While Prince's remains the historic original, Hattie B's has earned a loyal following thanks to its consistently crispy chicken, welcoming atmosphere, and spice levels that accommodate everyone from beginners to serious heat lovers. Multiple locations also make it one of the city's most convenient dining options.

Classic Southern sides like pimento mac and cheese, baked beans, and banana pudding complete the experience.

 **Local Tip:** Downtown lines can exceed an hour during lunch. Visit outside peak hours or choose one of the neighborhood locations for a shorter wait.

3. Arnold's Country Kitchen

- **Google Rating:** Highly Rated (4.7+/5)
- **Location:** 605 8th Avenue South, Nashville, TN
- **Best For:** Traditional Southern comfort food
- **Signature Dish:** Meat-and-Three Plate
- **Best Time to Visit:** Early lunch

Arnold's Country Kitchen is one of Nashville's most beloved dining institutions and a James Beard Award-winning restaurant famous for its classic "Meat-and-Three" tradition. Guests select one freshly prepared meat alongside

three homemade Southern side dishes, creating a meal that feels like Sunday dinner at a local family's home.

Favorites include roast beef, fried chicken, country-fried steak, macaroni and cheese, turnip greens, mashed potatoes, and freshly baked cornbread.

 **Local Tip:** Popular menu items often sell out before closing, so arriving shortly after opening gives you the best selection.

4. Loveless Cafe

- **Google Rating:** Highly Rated (4.6+/5)
- **Location:** 8400 Highway 100, Nashville, TN
- **Best For:** Breakfast, brunch, Southern classics
- **Signature Dish:** Homemade Biscuits with Country Ham
- **Best Time to Visit:** Weekday mornings

Located just outside downtown, Loveless Cafe has welcomed travelers since 1951 and remains one of Tennessee's most iconic restaurants. Its famous homemade biscuits, prepared fresh throughout the day, have become a Nashville tradition. Beyond breakfast, the menu features fried chicken, country ham, barbecue, homemade preserves, and classic Southern desserts served in a charming country setting.

For many visitors, eating at Loveless Cafe is as much about the experience as the food itself.

 **Local Tip:** Visit on a weekday if possible. Weekend breakfast waits can easily exceed an hour during peak travel seasons.

5. Martin's Bar-B-Que Joint

- **Google Rating:** Highly Rated (4.6+/5)
- **Location:** 410 4th Avenue South, Nashville, TN (Downtown)
- **Best For:** Authentic Tennessee barbecue
- **Signature Dish:** Whole Hog Barbecue Platter

- **Best Time to Visit:** Lunch or early dinner

Martin's Bar-B-Que Joint is considered one of the best barbecue restaurants in Tennessee. The restaurant specializes in traditional West Tennessee whole-hog barbecue, with pork slow-smoked over hickory wood for many hours until perfectly tender. Alongside the signature barbecue, diners can enjoy brisket, smoked turkey, ribs, and classic Southern sides prepared from scratch.

Its lively atmosphere and downtown location make it a favorite stop for both locals and visitors exploring Music City.

 **Local Tip:** Don't leave without trying the smoked brisket tacos or the famous cornbread hoecakes, two local favorites that regular visitors frequently recommend.

Best Date Night Restaurants

6. Kayne Prime

- **Google Rating:** Highly Rated (4.6+/5)
- **Location:** 1103 McGavock Street, Nashville, TN (The Gulch)
- **Best For:** Anniversaries, celebrations & romantic dinners
- **Signature Dish:** Wagyu Filet & Truffle Butter Ribeye
- **Best Time to Visit:** Dinner (5:30 PM to 8:00 PM)

If you are celebrating a special occasion in Nashville, Kayne Prime consistently ranks among the city's finest steakhouses. The sophisticated dining room, attentive service, and premium cuts of beef make it a favorite for anniversaries, birthdays, and proposal dinners. Beyond perfectly cooked steaks, the menu features fresh seafood, creative appetizers, handcrafted cocktails, and an extensive wine list that complements every meal.

Despite its upscale reputation, the atmosphere remains welcoming rather than overly formal, making it an excellent choice for visitors looking to enjoy one unforgettable evening in Music City.

 **Local Tip:** Request a window table or arrive just before sunset for a more intimate dining experience before exploring The Gulch's nightlife.

7. Etch

- **Google Rating:** Highly Rated (4.7+/5)
- **Location:** 303 Demonbreun Street, Nashville, TN (Downtown)
- **Best For:** Food lovers & contemporary American cuisine
- **Signature Dish:** Roasted Cauliflower with Truffle Pea Purée
- **Best Time to Visit:** Dinner

Etch has become one of downtown Nashville's most celebrated restaurants thanks to its inventive menu and beautifully presented dishes. Instead of focusing solely on traditional Southern cuisine, the chefs combine global flavors with locally sourced ingredients to create a dining experience that feels modern, creative, and approachable.

From expertly prepared seafood to perfectly cooked steaks and seasonal vegetables, every plate showcases thoughtful attention to flavor and presentation.

 **Local Tip:** The roasted cauliflower starter has become one of Nashville's signature dishes. Even guests who don't usually enjoy vegetables regularly order it.

8. Husk

- **Google Rating:** Highly Rated (4.6+/5)
- **Location:** 37 Rutledge Street, Nashville, TN (Rutledge Hill)
- **Best For:** Farm-to-table dining & Southern cuisine
- **Signature Dish:** Seasonal Southern Chef's Selection
- **Best Time to Visit:** Dinner

Located inside a beautifully restored historic mansion, Husk celebrates Southern cooking using ingredients sourced almost entirely from regional farms and

producers. Rather than serving a fixed menu, dishes change frequently depending on what's fresh and in season, giving every visit a slightly different experience.

The elegant setting, exceptional hospitality, and constantly evolving menu have made Husk one of Nashville's premier dining destinations for travelers seeking refined Southern cuisine.



Local Tip: Since the menu changes daily, ask your server about seasonal specialties rather than ordering solely from online recommendations.

9. The Optimist

- **Google Rating:** Highly Rated (4.6+/5)
- **Location:** 1400 Adams Street, Nashville, TN (Germantown)
- **Best For:** Seafood lovers & romantic dinners
- **Signature Dish:** Fresh Oysters & Wood-Grilled Fish
- **Best Time to Visit:** Dinner

Although Nashville sits far from the coast, The Optimist has earned a reputation for serving some of the freshest seafood in Tennessee. Its bright, modern dining room and relaxed atmosphere make it equally suitable for romantic dinners or casual evenings with friends.

The menu highlights sustainably sourced oysters, lobster rolls, seasonal fish, and creative small plates that encourage sharing, making the experience especially enjoyable for couples.



Local Tip: Visit during oyster happy hour if available for excellent value on fresh oysters and cocktails.

10. Bourbon Steak by Michael Mina

- **Google Rating:** Highly Rated (4.6+/5)
- **Location:** 201 8th Avenue South, Nashville, TN (JW Marriott)

- **Best For:** Luxury dining & milestone celebrations
- **Signature Dish:** Prime Beef & Duck Fat Fries
- **Best Time to Visit:** Dinner

Located inside the JW Marriott Nashville, Bourbon Steak offers one of the city's most luxurious dining experiences. Created by award-winning chef Michael Mina, the restaurant combines premium steaks, fresh seafood, elegant desserts, and an outstanding bourbon selection in a sophisticated setting overlooking the Nashville skyline.

Service is polished from start to finish, making every meal feel like a memorable event rather than simply dinner.

 **Local Tip:** Save room for dessert and enjoy a post-dinner cocktail in the hotel lounge while taking in the nighttime city views.

Best Local Favorites

While Nashville has plenty of nationally recognized restaurants, some of the city's most memorable meals come from neighborhood favorites that locals recommend time and time again. These restaurants may not always receive the same publicity as celebrity-owned establishments, but they consistently deliver authentic flavors, welcoming service, and outstanding value. If you want to experience Nashville beyond the tourist hotspots, these local gems deserve a place on your itinerary.

11. Monell's

- **Google Rating:** Highly Rated (4.7+/5)
- **Location:** 1235 6th Avenue North, Nashville, TN (Germantown)
- **Best For:** Families, groups & authentic Southern dining
- **Signature Dish:** Family-Style Southern Fried Chicken Meal
- **Best Time to Visit:** Lunch or Sunday Brunch

Monell's offers one of the most unique dining experiences in Nashville. Instead of ordering from a menu, guests share large platters of freshly prepared Southern

comfort food around communal tables with other diners. Fried chicken, roast beef, mashed potatoes, biscuits, macaroni and cheese, corn pudding, and seasonal vegetables are served family-style, encouraging conversation and hospitality that reflects traditional Southern culture.

It's an unforgettable experience that feels more like joining a family dinner than visiting a restaurant.

 **Local Tip:** Come hungry. Portions are generous, and seconds are encouraged.

12. The Pharmacy Burger Parlor & Beer Garden

- **Google Rating:** Highly Rated (4.6+/5)
- **Location:** 731 McFerrin Avenue, Nashville, TN (East Nashville)
- **Best For:** Burgers, craft beer & casual dining
- **Signature Dish:** Pharmacy Burger with House-Made Fries
- **Best Time to Visit:** Lunch

Built inside a restored pharmacy building, The Pharmacy Burger Parlor has become one of East Nashville's most popular neighborhood restaurants. Their burgers are made using locally sourced beef and freshly baked buns, while the expansive beer garden creates a relaxed atmosphere that's perfect for families, friends, and visitors looking to escape the busy downtown crowds.

The menu also features handcrafted sausages, house-made sauces, and an impressive selection of local craft beers.

 **Local Tip:** Visit during lunch on weekdays for shorter waits and easier parking.

13. Edley's Bar-B-Que

- **Google Rating:** Highly Rated (4.6+/5)
- **Location:** 2706 12th Avenue South, Nashville, TN (12 South)

- **Best For:** Barbecue lovers & casual family meals
- **Signature Dish:** Brisket Platter & Burnt Ends
- **Best Time to Visit:** Lunch or Early Dinner

Edley's Bar-B-Que blends traditional Southern barbecue with a modern neighborhood atmosphere. Every meat is slow-smoked daily, producing tender brisket, pulled pork, ribs, smoked turkey, and house-made sausages packed with rich smoky flavor. Homemade sides, including mac and cheese, baked beans, and cornbread, complete the meal.

Its welcoming atmosphere and multiple locations make Edley's a convenient stop whether you're exploring 12 South or other parts of Nashville.

 **Local Tip:** Order the burnt ends if they're available. They frequently sell out before closing.

14. Butcher & Bee

- **Google Rating:** Highly Rated (4.6+/5)
- **Location:** 902 Main Street, Nashville, TN (East Nashville)
- **Best For:** Healthy dining & Mediterranean-inspired cuisine
- **Signature Dish:** Whipped Feta with Honey
- **Best Time to Visit:** Dinner

Butcher & Bee has earned national recognition for its fresh, seasonal menu that blends Mediterranean flavors with Southern ingredients. Small plates encourage sharing, making it an excellent choice for couples or groups who enjoy sampling multiple dishes. The famous whipped feta, roasted vegetables, fresh seafood, and creative cocktails consistently rank among Nashville's best culinary experiences.

The stylish yet relaxed atmosphere makes it equally suitable for lunch or dinner.

 **Local Tip:** Don't skip the whipped feta. It's considered one of Nashville's signature appetizer dishes.

15. Mas Tacos Por Favor

- **Google Rating:** Highly Rated (4.7+/5)
- **Location:** 732 McFerrin Avenue, Nashville, TN (East Nashville)
- **Best For:** Budget-friendly meals & authentic Mexican street food
- **Signature Dish:** Fried Avocado Tacos & Tortilla Soup
- **Best Time to Visit:** Weekday Lunch

Small in size but huge in reputation, Mas Tacos Por Favor has become one of Nashville's most beloved neighborhood restaurants. Known for fresh ingredients, handmade tortillas, and bold Mexican flavors, this casual eatery proves that some of the city's best meals don't require fine dining prices.

Its tacos, soups, and rotating specials consistently attract long lines of locals, a good sign that the food lives up to its reputation.

 **Local Tip:** Seating is limited, so arrive early during lunch or order takeout if the restaurant is busy.

What to Eat in Nashville

While every traveler has their own favorites, these local specialties should be on every Nashville food itinerary.

Nashville Hot Chicken

The city's signature dish features crispy fried chicken coated in a spicy cayenne pepper seasoning. Prince's Hot Chicken Shack and Hattie B's are two of the most popular places to try it.

Tennessee Barbecue

Slow-smoked pork, brisket, ribs, and smoked turkey remain local favorites. Martin's and Edley's are excellent introductions to Nashville's barbecue scene.

Meat-and-Three

A Southern tradition where diners choose one meat and three homemade side dishes. Arnold's Country Kitchen continues to be one of the city's finest examples.

Southern Biscuits

Fresh, buttery biscuits served with country ham, sausage gravy, or homemade preserves are a Nashville breakfast staple. Loveless Cafe remains the gold standard.

Banana Pudding

Creamy layers of vanilla pudding, bananas, and cookies provide the perfect ending to a Southern meal.

Best Food Neighborhoods in Nashville

From trendy dining districts to historic local favorites, these Nashville neighborhoods offer some of the city's best restaurants, cafés, and unforgettable culinary experiences:

- **Downtown:** Perfect for first-time visitors looking for classic Nashville restaurants within walking distance of major attractions.
- **The Gulch:** Known for upscale restaurants, rooftop dining, and contemporary American cuisine.
- **Germantown:** Home to several award-winning chef-driven restaurants and some of Nashville's best fine dining.
- **East Nashville:** The city's creative food district, packed with neighborhood cafés, breweries, tacos, burgers, and innovative local restaurants.
- **12 South:** A favorite for brunch, bakeries, coffee shops, barbecue, and relaxed outdoor dining.

Local Dining Tips while Visiting Nashville

Use these practical dining tips to avoid long waits, discover local favorites, and make the most of every meal during your Nashville trip:

- Make reservations for popular dinner restaurants several weeks in advance, especially during spring and fall.
 - Hot chicken restaurants are busiest during lunch. Visit early or mid-afternoon to avoid long waits.
 - Many barbecue restaurants prepare limited quantities daily, so arriving earlier gives you the best selection.
 - Don't overlook neighborhood restaurants outside downtown. East Nashville, Germantown, and 12 South offer many of the city's highest-rated dining experiences.
 - If you are visiting multiple days, try one classic Southern restaurant, one barbecue restaurant, one hot chicken spot, and one chef-driven restaurant to experience Nashville's diverse food scene.
-

Conclusion

Nashville's food scene extends far beyond its famous hot chicken. From legendary Southern institutions and award-winning barbecue restaurants to upscale steakhouses and innovative neighborhood eateries, Music City offers unforgettable dining experiences for every traveler and budget. Whether you're spending one weekend or an entire week exploring Nashville, these restaurants showcase the flavors, hospitality, and culinary creativity that have made the city one of America's premier food destinations.

Take this guide with you to discover Nashville's best restaurants, signature dishes, neighborhood food districts, and local dining tips wherever your trip takes you.

Frequently Asked Questions

What food is Nashville most famous for?

Nashville is best known for Nashville Hot Chicken, but visitors should also try Tennessee barbecue, Southern meat-and-three meals, homemade biscuits, and banana pudding.

Which restaurant should first-time visitors try?

Prince's Hot Chicken Shack, Arnold's Country Kitchen, Martin's Bar-B-Que Joint, and Loveless Cafe are excellent choices for experiencing Nashville's signature foods.

Do Nashville restaurants require reservations?

Many popular dinner restaurants, especially in The Gulch and Germantown, recommend reservations several weeks in advance, particularly on weekends.

Where do locals eat in Nashville?

Locals frequently dine in East Nashville, Germantown, and 12 South, where many independently owned restaurants, cafés, and breweries are located.

Is Nashville expensive for dining?

Dining costs vary widely. Visitors can enjoy excellent meals for under \$20 at casual restaurants or choose luxury dining experiences that exceed \$100 per person.

Which Nashville neighborhood has the best restaurants?

Germantown, The Gulch, East Nashville, Downtown, and 12 South each offer outstanding dining options, with every neighborhood providing its own unique atmosphere and culinary specialties.