

bon appétit

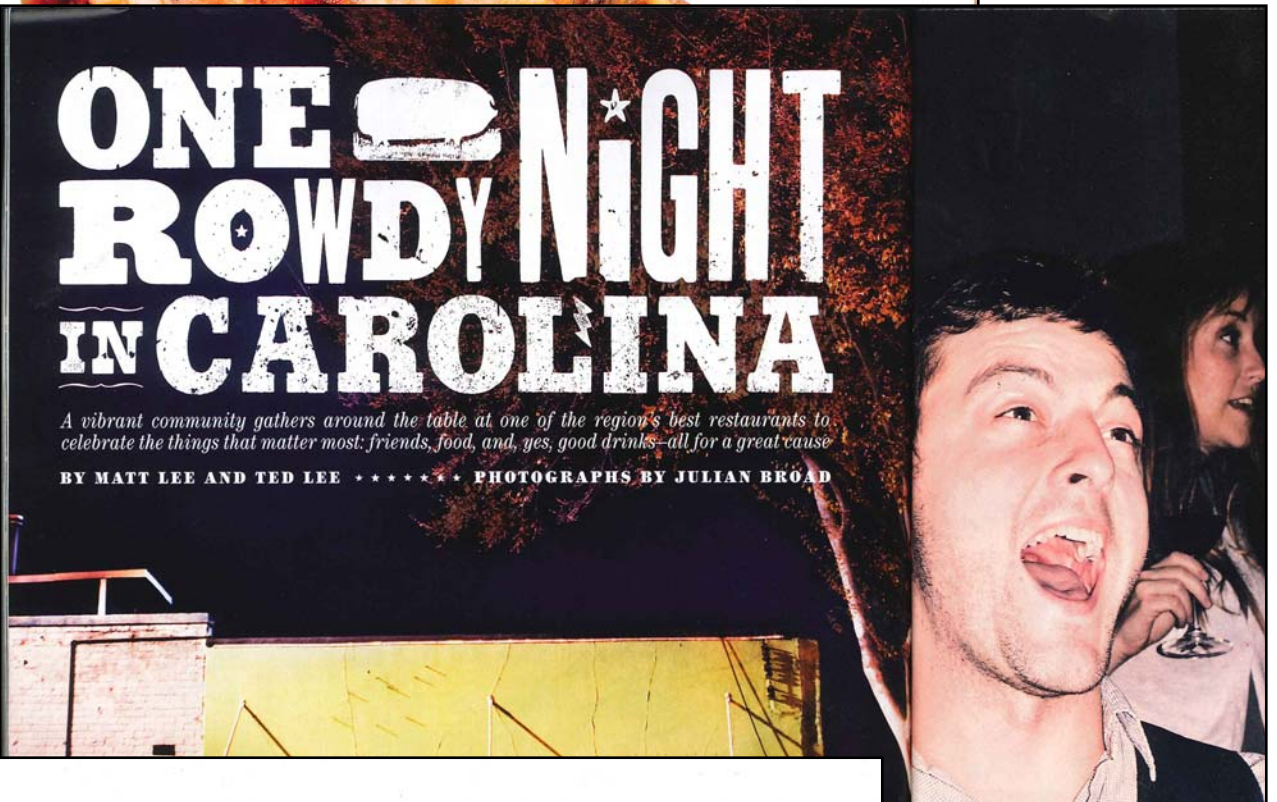
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ONE NIGHT ROWDY NIGHT IN CAROLINA

A vibrant community gathers around the table at one of the region's best restaurants to celebrate the things that matter most: friends, food, and, yes, good drinks—all for a great cause

BY MATT LEE AND TED LEE ***** PHOTOGRAPHS BY JULIAN BROAD

THE BEST FRIED



LIFE IS RICH AND FULL” stretches across the inside of chef Ashley Christensen’s left bicep in swirling Victorian cursive. The ink is revealed as she reaches over the bar of her restaurant, Poole’s Downtown Diner in Raleigh, North Carolina, to fill a guest’s flute with Billecart-Salmon Brut Rosé.

Like much of Christensen’s life, the tattoo is a collaboration, designed by Luke Miller Buchanan, a North Carolina artist-cum-bartender. Four years ago, he helped Christensen rebuild Poole’s, a former pie shop in a then-desolate part of downtown. Buchanan still tends bar and writes the chalkboard menus at Poole’s, including the one for tonight’s dinner, which is (naturally) a collaboration, this one with Ed Lee, chef and owner of 610 Magnolia in Louisville.

Christensen has made a mission of sharing the richness and fullness of life, and tonight she and Lee have invited a cast of players in Raleigh’s food and arts communities. The aim is to thank them for their support of Stir the Pot, the seasonal dinner series Christensen started two years ago to raise money for the documentary film initiative

of the Southern Foodways Alliance. (The Sunday-night dinner is a five-course meal cooked with a guest chef—or two—at Poole’s; the following evening is a \$35 potluck held in Christensen’s home.) The SFA, an institute of the University of Mississippi’s Center for the Study of Southern Culture in Oxford, explores and celebrates the food of the South. Recent SFA films have profiled the septuagenarian South Carolina peach farmer Dori Sanders and the Big Apple Inn in Jackson, Mississippi, known for being a cradle of the civil rights movement as well as the purveyor of the nation’s best pig-ear sandwiches.

A native of Kernersville, North Carolina, Christensen was raised by a truck-driving father who kept bees and tended an organic garden, and a mother who was, in Christensen’s words, “one of those legendary, learned-at-her-grandmother’s-elbow Southern home cooks.” By the time she was tapped to cook at the SFA symposium in 2008, she’d been cooking in kitchens around Raleigh-Durham for 12 years. “I was so blown away by the number of genuine connections I made in Oxford,” she says. “I wanted to bring that sense of community home.” She hit upon the idea of inviting *(continued on page 99)*

THE POT-STIRRERS

WHO’S COOKED

- Sean Brock McCrady’s, Charleston, SC
- John Currence City Grocery, Oxford, MS
- Tyler Brown Capitol Grille & Tandy Wilson* City House, Nashville
- John Fleer Canyon Kitchen, Cashiers, NC

WHO’S COOKING

- Joseph Lenn The Barn at Blackberry Farm, Walland, TN, Feb. 5–6
- Steven Satterfield Miller Union, Atlanta, May 20–21

* Stir the Pot Nashville launches April 15–16. stirthepotluck.com

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[editorial]



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