

# SECOND HARVEST, SECOND TO NONE

Charlotte Chefs Eat Up The Chance to Help Feed the Hungry



No child should grow up hungry in America, and yet unbelievably, one in five children struggles with hunger every day. Many of us often talk about how we are starving or famished as we sit down to lunch or dinner; but truth is, if you ate dinner last night or breakfast this morning or have plans for a lunchtime meeting today, you don't honestly know hunger.

Like many of you, I've been fortunate to have grown up in a home where we always had food on the table, in the refrigerator and in the pantry; so I can't say that I know what hunger really feels like. But, as a former kindergarten teacher, I have most certainly seen the affects of hunger on children right here in Charlotte.

Kids who are hungry can't think, and they can't perform at optimum levels. They can't listen to direction, and so they often get in trouble – all because they simply haven't had anything to eat. Unable to reach their true potential, hungry kids are too tired or don't have the strength to really enjoy all their young lives have to offer. And hungry kids, often feeling no other option, resort to theft to feed themselves and often times their families.

The same goes for our community's seniors. At a time in their lives when they should be able to relax, enjoy and reflect on their lives, many find themselves in a position to have to choose between eating and the cost of medicine, utilities or housing. If eating healthy isn't an option, then hunger will only

serve to intensify any other ailments and illnesses that come with age.

Mind you, these aren't problems we just read about in the news or something that happens to someone else in some other country – it's a problem right here in Charlotte, and it's time for it to end.

As always, our community of Charlotte area chefs, as well as chefs across the Carolinas have taken the lead this year, showcasing their collective talent in a variety of fundraisers to help raise funds to feed the hungry.

Second Harvest Food Bank of Metrolina, run under the excellent supervision of director Kay Carter, sponsors several events through the course of the year – among them Chef's Best, an annual dinner featuring several Charlotte chefs, helping to raise funds for hunger relief. The theme this year was "homegrown", and the event not only raised monies to help feed the hungry, but paid tribute to the people, products and businesses started in North Carolina, just like event title sponsor Harris Teeter and Second Harvest, as well. Participating chefs included Charlotte native Chef Chris Coleman of The Asbury at The Dunhill Hotel; Chef Gene Briggs of Blue Restaurant & Bar, Osso Restaurant & Lounge, and the newest sushi bar in town, Eight; Chef Tom Condron of The Liberty and Lumiere French Kitchen; Chef Bruce Moffett of Moffett Restaurant Group which includes Barrington's Restaurant, Good Food

on Montford and Stagioni; and Chef Ashley Quick of Stagioni. And, as they have in years past, the opening reception was catered by students and faculty of the International Culinary School at the Art Institute of Charlotte.

Second Harvest also helps promote and benefits from another annual event – Taste of the Panthers, held each year in the Club Level of BOA stadium, generally in October just as football season begins.

It has been my pleasure to be a part of the team of judges for this event several years running now, and I love the fact that so many Charlotte chefs and restaurants get in on the act. This year 18 different Charlotte culinary venues participated. Awards for best booth display went to the team from Nolen Kitchen; Best Dish Presentation to the team from Barrington's Restaurant, and the award for the best overall dish – a perfect bite of potato gnocchi, duck confit and a pumpkin cream with warm toasted hazelnuts went to the team from Roosters Uptown and chef Joe Kindred.

For more information about Second Harvest Food Bank visit [www.secondharvestmetrolina.org](http://www.secondharvestmetrolina.org). \* Pictured above from left to right: Charlotte Chefs Tom Condron and Gene Briggs wow the crowd at Chef's Best; Best Presentation at Taste of the Panthers goes to Chef Bruce Moffett for this beautiful plate from Barrington's; the Team from Roosters Uptown takes the win for the Best Dish at Taste of the Panthers.

# New Kids on the Block

Three new chef driven restaurants tell Charlotte how it's done

Chef Driven, Local Farms, Local Food – all culinary buzz words of the day for several years, but somehow now just coming to the forefront in Queen City circles.

With 2014 the "Eat Local" mantra has really taken hold, with many local restaurants and chefs supporting hundreds of different local farms – it's not really a question of whether or not a restaurant chef will use local product any more, as much as it now is which farms to support and what local product or produce to feature over the course of the changing seasons, with menus changing from every quarter to every month and in some cases, every day.

Take a look at my 2014 More than a Baker's Dozen list which follows this article. I am proud to note that more than half of the new restaurants open this past year are locally driven; nearly all the rest use as much local product as they can and continue to add in more as menu and availability allow.

Before this issue's list of some of my favorite local restaurants you really should try for the first time or take time out to revisit, I thought it would be interesting to stop in on three of Charlotte's newest hot spots on the list, all just open this year; and all strongly chef driven, but each different enough to give three sides to the story. Let's see how it's going, what these chefs are serving and if it has been all they thought it would be.

# Heirloom Restaurant

Lenoir, North Carolina native Clark Barlowe actually started his culinary career in Charlotte as a student at Johnston & Wales, and at the same time, working on the team at Mama Ricotta's; but then took a rather circuitous route before he landed back in the Queen City with a restaurant all his own. Barlowe traveled first to California for a stint at The French Laundry, then to Providence, RI at Chez Pascal, to Spain at El Bulli, to Washington, DC for Clyde's Restaurant Group and to Bermuda, to refurbish and reopen North Rock restaurant. Oh, and in between, he also appeared on The Food Network's *Chopped*. It goes without saying this chef has some mighty fine creds under his belt.

But with all that said, the most amazing thing about what Chef Clark Barlowe has brought to the table at his independently owned Heirloom, is the fact that he has made a commitment no other Charlotte chef has done to date, and that is to serve ONLY North Carolina product. From the wine, beer and spirits to the fare in the kitchen, the North Carolina Department of Agriculture will be delighted to hear me say it's all grown, caught, raised or made in the great state of North Carolina.

Was creating a restaurant concept all his own, basically all on his own, all Barlowe expected it to be? Yes, he says and then confesses with a smile that it has actually been more than he anticipated. He totally refurbished the space and the kitchen in the Coulwood neighborhood's Bellhaven Blvd. location, and so he confesses that this first year, "everything that could go wrong, has gone wrong." Year one nearly said and done, he's confident that year two will be a breeze.

Interiors at Heirloom are rustic in a worldly sort of way. The outside roof – home to Heirloom's own bee boxes – have been stained to look old and worn. The interior walls are covered in repurposed barn wood from a family farm, and the furniture and serving pieces are in great part cleverly repurposed objects as well.

It's an experience, you'll want to repeat. The menu at Heirloom changes every day and is totally based on what is available that week, that day, that hour. Clark supports nearly 90 different area farms, so the breadth and depth of what's available is generally pretty wide open. Paying homage to the farmer, Clark and his talented staff use each ingredient to it's fullest potential, from tip to tail, creating a work of art in presenting each plate.

Flavors are intricate, texture is key. Tasting menus are fun and a great way to try it all. It's nearly impossible to make a recommendation as every dish changes from day to day, but guests at Heirloom will delight in knowing that they are enjoying any given item from Krenz Ranch beef to Lucky Clay greens at the height of just harvested flavor.



Chef Clark Barlowe - Heirloom Restaurant

Always on the lookout for something new, Chef Clark's most surprising find of the 2014 fall season is a green called water spinach which he found at the regional market from a small family farm called "Ma's Garden". Water spinach is stalkier than its traditional counterpart and almost tastes like asparagus, so Barlowe has found that when asparagus season has come and gone, the water spinach makes a nice substitute, and after a bite or so myself, I would have to agree.

Barlowe is in the kitchen every night, and after a long day with a small staff he usually heads home rather than out after work. But when Heirloom is closed on Mondays, he tries to take time to visit other local chefs who also live la vida local and see what they are doing. One of his favorite places to treat himself: Luca Annunziata's Passion 8.

When I asked Chef Clark about his favorite local culinary event, I was proud as local punch that while he loved the Piedmont Culinary Guild's Bacon Brews and Cruise event and the Asheville Food and Wine weekend, he said his participation in the Southern Ideal Home Show cooking stage, which I am fortu-

nate to host each summer, was one of his very favorite 2014 events.

"It was a great to actually have the time to chat with people about what I do and the principals that are important to me, and share a recipe in the process." As host of the cooking stage, this food writer is delighted to have Clark (and the other two chefs featured in this article) back on stage with me at the Southern Spring Show in 2015 – show dates are Feb. 20-22 and Feb. 27-Mar. 1. Stay tuned.

Meanwhile you'll find Heirloom's busy Charlotte chef/restaurant owner at a trio of local markets on any given Saturday morning. Generally, he starts early at the regional market on Yorkmont Road, then he heads to the Davidson Farmers Market, set up just off of Main Street in downtown Davidson, and then back up to the Atherton Mill and Market on South Blvd. All done before noon, Chef Clark heads back to the kitchen to put the creative process into action.

Hard to pin a man who buys from 90 different farms through the course of the changing seasons down to just a few, but when pressed, Clarke admitted that a few of his favorite local finds are constant and include: Outer Banks Sea Salt, Lucky Clay farms hydroponic greens; tomatoes, of all kinds, fresh in season and then powdered, canned, dried, frozen and pickled by the Heirloom staff for use during the rest of the year; and just about anything from farmer James Swofford.

Want to cook like Clark Barlowe? Four of his must-haves in the kitchen are spoons, large and small to help with his intricate plating; his IronMan Forge knives from local bladesmith Steve Watkins (see my culinary gift guide on page 70), his immersion blender and his dehydrator – he claims he'd be lost without it.

Through the holidays and on into the new year plan to enjoy one of Clark Barlowe's monthly cooking classes which feature three courses and a North Carolina cocktail or one of his artisan dinners which feature five courses each paired with a local wine or craft brew.

For more info on Heirloom's nightly menus, special events, weekend brunches and more, follow Chef Clark Barlowe on twitter at @heirloomrestnc; On Instagram at @Clarkbarlowe; and on Facebook @Clark Barlowe.

Heirloom Restaurant is located at 8470 Bellhaven Blvd., Charlotte, NC 28216. Call 704.595.7710 or visit HeirloomRestaurantNC.com.



FROM HEIRLOOM RESTAURANT: Barton Farm yellow tomato salad with house cured lardo, Lucky Clay red veined sorrel and aged herb vinaigrette



FROM HEIRLOOM RESTAURANT: New River Organic Growers (NROG) organic garden golden cauliflower with Ma's Garden grilled water spinach, Charlotte Fish Company BBQ fish ribs, NROG violas and Cha! by Texas Pete



FROM HEIRLOOM RESTAURANT: House Made tortilla topped with cream fraiche, salsa, Asgard Farm crisp duck, Lucky Clay sunflower shoots

# The Asbury

While I know all of the chefs in this article well, I have known chef Chris Coleman the longest. I met Chris at the McNinch House nearly a decade ago, where he was putting his own creative culinary spin on nightly edible doses of the McNinch House's elegant brand of Southern Hospitality. McNinch owner Ellen Davis gave Coleman reign in the kitchen, and while he was there, he was able to hone his skills.

Feeling it was time to spread his wings and grow, Chris left the McNinch House in 2013 to explore the possibility of taking on more and was almost immediately hired as the Food and Beverage director at the Historic Dunhill Hotel and executive chef at The Asbury, the restaurant located just off the Dunhill lobby.

With influences from his family's recipes and inspirations from local product, both paired with impact from the rest of The Asbury's very creative culinary team, Chef Chris has been able to grow his style into The Asbury's signature take on Southern taste, flavors and traditions.

Was it all he expected it to be? "Yes," he said, "and more. It's been exciting and exhausting, frustrating, stressful and full of joy – all at the same time," he laughed as we sat down for a chat.

"There are certain challenges and adjustments I had not anticipated (that come with being) a hotel restaurant," Coleman continued.

While the pros of a built-in clientele and the financial backing he may not have had if he had gone out on his own, outweigh the cons of being open seven days a week, including holidays; and how a room service menu differs from one served plate by plate, course by course; Chef Chris is the first to admit it's been an adjustment, but nothing he couldn't handle.

"For nine years it was just me and one other chef in my kitchen, now I have a staff of six at any one time."

Good news here is Chef Chris has settled in with an incredible core group of talented chefs at his side, among them: Chef Matt Krenz as chef de cuisine, Hector Gonzalez as sous chef and Jossie Perlmutter working the pastry and bread end of things. And the even better news is that with time, since The Asbury debuted just after January 2014, this core has become a well oiled machine, cooking up a storm of local ingredients, honing in on the nuances of what

began as Chef Chris' and now is The Asbury's signature style.

This season things are smoking in The Asbury kitchen with a rich warm campfire theme as inspiration. Start the meal with any one of a dozen and a half small plates, among them, ember roasted pumpkin, chicken liver mousse, Hearth roasted oysters, and for goodness sakes don't miss the jar o' Doc's housemade pickled veggies or greens before you go on to the delicious entrees and then finish with dessert.



Chef Chris Coleman - The Asbury

Before I go any further, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the bar at the Dunhill. This small salon area just outside the entryway to the restaurant is fitted with a bar that seats 8-10 and is the domain of Pete Ladino, the Dunhill's resident bartender. Pete has never met a stranger and will make you feel right at home. Visit twice and he's sure to remember your name. Do plan to arrive early or stay late to enjoy a signature cocktail with Pete before or after your meal – you'll be glad you did!

As a husband and father of the young Luke

Coleman, Chef Chris will certainly stop to speak to clients at the bar but then heads home after service. He's a family guy "...with a great wife and a kid I don't see nearly enough."

To that end, dining out for the Coleman family finds this trio at family friendly spots these days – favorites include Miguel's Mexican & American Restaurant off Little Rock Road, Alexander Michael's in Fourth Ward and Shuffletown Drive-In, or as Luke likes to call it, "The Pancake Store."

"It's a family friendly place, with an incredible staff, and I have to say, their pancakes are solid," Chris told me.

As a member of the ever growing Charlotte area chefs group called Piedmont Culinary Guild, one of Coleman's favorite local events was this past summer's Bacon, Brews and Cruise-In. Coleman feels that Charlotte culinary events are really just in their infancy now that chefs are starting to get in on the actual planning, instead of just being called on to provide the food – case in point was the success of the Carved (pumpkin carving) event this past October – another fundraiser put on by PCG.

At the Asbury, Coleman and his team of chefs are all about local. Chef Chris buys from three wholesalers who represent small farms across the state. ECO, New River and Leading Green bring the fresh farmed product directly to the restaurant, and so at any given time, The Asbury supports 30-40 North Carolina family farms, and in addition buys from about 18 local farmers, including a farm I have mentioned in this article once before, Krenz Ranch, owned by the family of chef Matthew Krenz.

"We bring in a half cow at a time," explained Chris. "That's about 350-400 lbs. of beef. And we serve it all in the course of about two weeks."

The chefs don't cherry pick their beef, they use the whole cow; and so instead having a same old, same old "steak" as the only beef offering on the menu, they cut the half into a mix of tenderloin, ribeye, strips, sirloin roasts, chuck roast, shoulders, brisket, flank, round and ground. This variety gives them the ability to offer a different Krenz beef blackboard special every day. I have had it twice – once flank and once the tenderloin pictured here – both times the selection was beyond delicious and a nice change up from simple "steak on a plate." It felt good to eat local

FROM THE ASBURY: Krenz Ranch Beef blackboard offering, served with pumpkin risotto, roast pumpkin and Harmony Ridge beets, Tega Hill Farms fennel and shaved breakfast radishes from Harmony Ridge and New River Growers



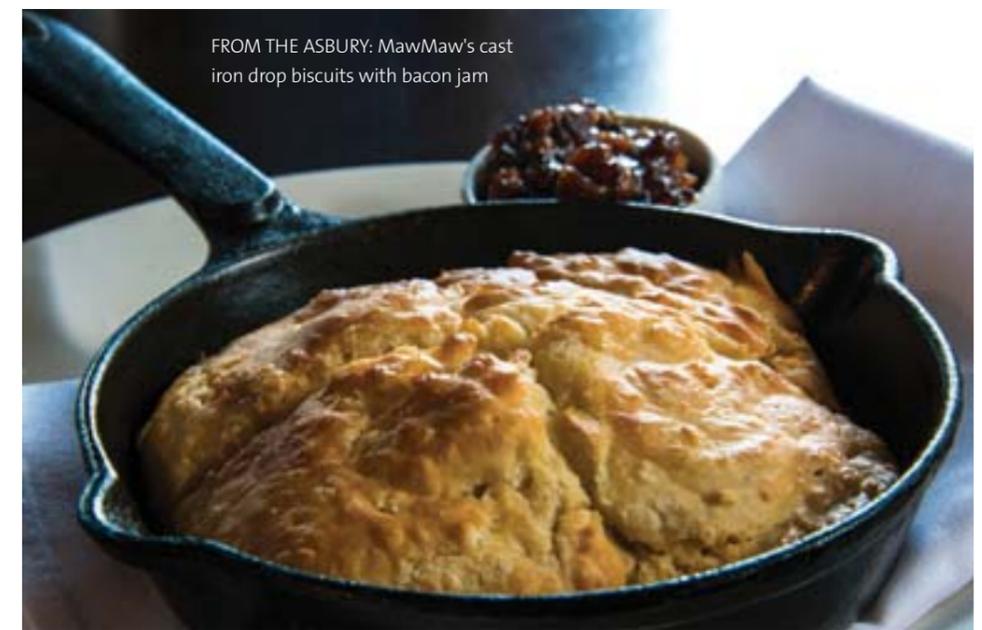
and, as I have had the pleasure of meeting the Krenz family, to really know where my food was coming from.

When Coleman is off on a Saturday morning, he often takes Luke and heads to shop the Davidson Farmers' Market to meet up with fellow chef and friend Joe Kindred of Roosters Uptown and soon to be Kindreds' in Davidson.

With all the local product at hand, Coleman's new favorite finds this season have been Guinea hens and gill feather turnips, the latter an old heritage veggie grown by farmer Brent Barbee. Since starting at The Asbury, Chef Chris also cooks with a lot of rice and beans. He seems to love Anson Mills rice grits and farro piccolo, in particular, and as of this writing he had just gotten in some locally grown Austrian winter peas he was anxious to try.

Five foods Coleman can't do without: rice, salt, butter, pork fat (you knew it was coming) and like Chef Clark Barlowe, tomatoes. The staff at The Asbury put up lots of the summer harvest in the guise of sauces and also roasted a lot of tomatoes which they have frozen and sealed with Cryovac to serve this winter.

Want to cook like Chef Chris Coleman? Here are five pieces of kitchen equipment he can't do without



FROM THE ASBURY: MawMaw's cast iron drop biscuits with bacon jam

– his immersion circulator and his VacMaster (this is the cryovac machine) – you need both of these to be able to cook *sous vide*. Next his Global knives, cast iron skillets and griddle pans, and his smoker stocked full with a mix of Hickory and applewood.

To keep up with Chef Chris Coleman and the

seasonal menu at The Asbury, follow Chris on Twitter at @ChefCColeman and on Facebook at Chef-Chris Coleman.

The Asbury is located off the lobby of the historic Dunhill Hotel at 235 North Tryon Street. Call 704.342.1193. Visit [DunhillHotel.com/Dining](http://DunhillHotel.com/Dining).



FROM THE ASBURY: Deviled eggs with fried cornichons, pickled mustard seeds, smoked paprika and roasted garlic oil

# Fahrenheit

Chef Rocco Whalen came in town this year and opened his new Charlotte venue on top of the newly built Hyatt Place Hotel and Skye Condominiums. Whalen's Charlotte venture is his seventh restaurant; so while he is new to Charlotte's culinary skyline (the six other venues are in Cleveland), he is not new to the restaurant game and what it takes to make it happen.

One of Chef Rocco's first priorities was to garner a staff here that could take the ball and run with it while he was flying between cities tending to the rest of his flock. Mission accomplished in Chef de Cuisine David Feimster and sous chef Walter Hyde who followed Rocco from his Cleveland base, and the culinary team that followed.

Even with a great support staff in place, it speaks volumes that it is important to Whalen to be hands on, so he divides his time equally between Cleveland and Charlotte and has worked hard to become be a part of the Charlotte community.

Chef and team support aside, I wondered out loud if this new location, in a new 21 floor mixed use concept, in a new city, was all he thought it would be?

Rocco quickly answers "Yes!" to my first question.

There have been issues of course, as with any new concept, but the Fahrenheit team quickly worked out the kinks and the hiccups that come with being new and, ever since, it's been a smooth ride all the way to the 21st floor.

Since it's opening, in what now seems like no time at all, Fahrenheit has quickly become one of the Queen City's most recommendable dining establishments. The venue undoubtedly has the best view in the city. In fact, it is my strong suggestion that no matter the season, you plan your dinner reservation around the time it takes to leisurely take in the sunset from the Fahrenheit rooftop over cocktails or a glass or two of wine, breathe it all in and prepare to enjoy the rest of the evening.

The menu, which changes quarterly, lives up to the striking atmosphere with an air of creative yet comfortable sophistication. Dining at Fahrenheit is always fun, so look for nightly specials – Rocco says there have been over 750 of them so far, but who's counting? Plan to order a selection, and for goodness sake, plan to share at least a taste across the table. From my personal favorite ramen noodle appetizer

to a rich array of desserts that cap off the Fahrenheit experience, the level, quality and presentation of each dish delights.

"We haven't tried to limit ourselves and haven't set out any parameters," explained Chef Rocco. "We have our own rooftop garden and try hard to support a number of local growers and producers. It's a good feeling that so many local farmers want to do business."



Chef Rocco Whalen - Fahrenheit

One of Rocco's biggest surprises in opening Fahrenheit Charlotte was the amount of seafood Queen City clientele enjoy; and with good reason. Seafood options this close to the Carolina coast are limitless, and the seafood selections on the Fahrenheit menu, as well as those offered as specials, are simply sublime.

Whalen was surprised, too, by the warmth and level of acceptance from the Charlotte community – not sure what he was expecting, but happy to say we didn't disappoint. One should never underestimate the value of a good dose of Southern hospitality!

After having been a part of this community for even a short time, Rocco is most disappointed that Charlotte's talented chefs and culinary goings on don't get the regional and national attention they deserve. One of his goals for the upcoming year is to do his part to try to turn that around.

While Rocco is in town, he has enjoyed getting to

know his new home away from home.

"The restaurant business is hard, and we've all been there. We have a lot of talent in town, and I'm often envious of what these other chefs are doing."

To that end, when Whalen is not working himself, he tries to be as supportive as possible. Several of his favorites places so far include the local craft beer districts, as well as The Asbury, Heirloom, Passion 8, Midwood Smokehouse, Luna's Living Kitchen, Nan and Byron's, Roosters Uptown, and for breakfast, Kings Kitchen.

He loves the SouthEnd vibe, so after hours you may spot him with other Fahrenheit staffers at the Shell station on the corner of East and South boulevards for a late night fried chicken fix!

And on any given weekday or on Saturday mornings, it stands to reason that one might see him shopping at the Atherton Farmers' market.

Rocco features several local products on his Fahrenheit menu and has brought a taste of Charlotte back to Cleveland, as well, shipping cases of Cloister Honey to feature in his "can't possibly take it off the menu" Tempura Rock Shrimp – a favorite, I am told, of NBA star Patrick Ewing.

Want to cook like Rocco Whalen? Here are his five must haves in the kitchen: a Vitamix, Calphalon pots and pan, sharp knives, good coffee and a coffee grinder, and a nice selection of red and white wines.

You can follow Rocco on Twitter at @Rock1chef; on Instagram at Rock1chef or on Facebook @Chef Rocco Whalen.

Fahrenheit Charlotte is located at 222 S. Caldwell Street, Charlotte, NC 28202. Call 980.237.6718 or visit [ChefRoccoWhalen.com](http://ChefRoccoWhalen.com). \*



FROM FAHRENHEIT: Chorizo stuffed dates with Heritage Farms bacon, Tega Hill Farms pea shoots and sundried tomato aioli



FROM FAHRENHEIT: Diver scallops with cauliflower puree, roasted cauliflower, pomegranate-molasses drizzle with pomegranate seeds and arugula