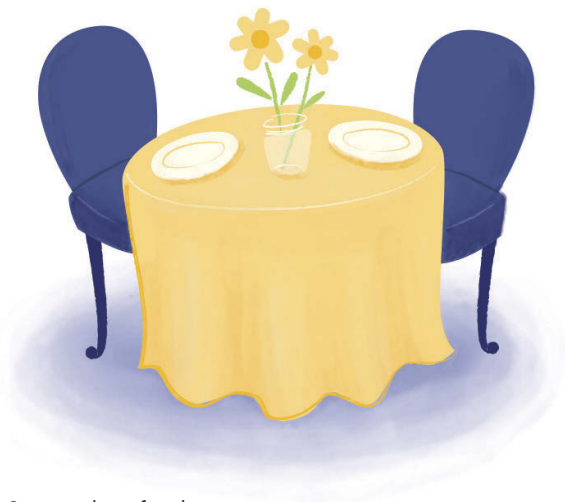


Southern Foodways Alliance Most Visited Places



IN 2013, KRISTEN FARMER HALL WAS WORKING IN MEDICAL FUNDRAISING AND COMMUNITY relations for the University of Alabama at Birmingham when, she says, “pastry chose me.” She began baking pastries with her two young daughters and leaving the treats on neighbors’ doorsteps, earning the trio the nickname “the Baking Bandits.” Hall started a Bandit Pâtisserie pop-up before selling at the Pepper Place Farmers’ Market. Eventually, her boss asked her to choose: her job or her hobby. She submitted a resignation letter the next day. “I’d always done the right thing, always been on the straight and narrow,” she says. “This was something totally different.” A year later, she met chef Victor King, who became her business partner. Today, they own and operate The Essential, an all-day American café; La Fête, a French bistro and wine bar; and Bandit Pâtisserie, a small-batch, seasonal bakery. Here, Hall shares her favorite places to unwind in the Magic City.



La Fête

If I have to pick a favorite child, I’ll pick La Fête in its new location [on Morris Avenue] and a seat at the pink marble bar. Last night I worked dinner service. The patio was full, and there was a little chill in the air. We played the original version of *Batman* in black and white. It was magic. My order is the country pâté and potato pavé—I eat them over and over, usually with a glass of riesling or white Burgundy.

Golden Age Wine

[My perfect] order would be sharing a bottle of riesling and a 50/50 [meat and cheese] board. I know the families who own Golden Age, so it's fun to go in there and see familiar faces and try new things. And the aesthetic—Amanda Loper is the architect, and she's wonderful. I love being in places that are thoughtful.



Chez Fonfon

My life is chaotic and a *lot*. If I'm going out into the world, I go to places that feel like home. We sit at the bar. It's a nice place to rest. My order is the seasonal tartine or escargot, or sometimes an omelet and a pot de crème with espresso.

June Coffee

A cappuccino outside on the patio. It's so fun for me to be in another space downtown that isn't mine, and see other people in their shops. Most people have no idea what goes into opening a brick and mortar. To see other people doing it at the level they do is very encouraging. And the coffee is delicious.

