



**THE ULTIMATE  
GUIDE TO**

# **EAST FRANKLIN STREET**

**Think You Know  
East Franklin?  
Think Again.**

Explore new favorites and  
rediscover beloved classics.



# EAT & DRINK



It's hard to keep up with the number of restaurants that have opened on East Franklin Street over the last decade, with newcomers popping up alongside historic anchor restaurants. Here's the most up-to-date list that quite literally has something for everyone.

## Bandido's Mexican Cafe

Ever since opening in May 1995 in one of Franklin Street's most famous alleys, Bandido's has been serving the sort of Mexican fare that works equally well as the start to a night or the end to one.

**TIP:** We dare you to conquer the El Gigante, its biggest burrito weighing 4-5 lbs, in one hour or less for a chance to win a free T-shirt and a picture on the restaurant's wall of fame. Don't forget the \$2.99 house margaritas on Tuesday!

## Basecamp

The restaurant and bar opened earlier this summer and offers international food with several rotating menus.

**TIP:** It's open for dinner and drinks Thursday-Saturday as well as brunch on Sundays. Don't skip the strawberry basil mojito.

## Blue Horn

Jam out to classic rock, '80's punk or post-grunge tunes at this tiny dive bar.

**TIP:** Take a shot of Fireball while you're at it, and check out the bathroom (it's all the rage).

## Bon Chon

This fast-growing Korean fried chicken chain opened in January 2018. It's the first restaurant you'll see driving into East Franklin Street, and the only spot in Chapel Hill specializing in the hand-battered, double-fried dish.

**TIP:** Get a half-and-half order of the spicy and garlic wings and some beer.

## Buns

This popular burger bar hidden in plain sight offers one of the best veggie burgers in the Triangle.

**TIP:** Order the French fries so you can try all the sauces – the chipotle mayo and wasabi mayo tops the list.

## Buena Vibra

This new restaurant and bar specializing in Caribbean cuisine opened in February and its name translates to "good vibes" in Spanish. The location on East Rosemary Street features a beach theme with vibrant colors, plants and lighting.

**Bonus:** It turns into a nightclub at 10 p.m.

## Cosmic Cantina

Open from 11 a.m. to 4 a.m., Cosmic serves classic Mexican food, including burritos, quesadillas, tacos and chimichangas at cheap prices.

**TIP:** Tucked in an alley off East Franklin Street, it can be packed late at night Thursday through Saturday, but nothing beats Cosmic at 1 a.m.

## Carolina Coffeeshop

This year marks the 100th anniversary of Franklin Street mainstay, and part of its century milestone celebration was expanding and opening its adjacent sister cafe, 1922, which opened in early February.

**TIP:** The addition of 1922 allows CCS enthusiasts to pick what suits their needs: A classic restaurant with a full bar at the original location or a cafe space featuring grab-and-go items, such as ham and cheese croissants, and room to spread out at a table with a laptop.

# MORE EAT & DRINK



## Dame's Chicken & Waffles

Dame's has long mastered this ultimate Southern combo and opened its fourth (and newest) spot on East Franklin Street last year. Co-founder Damion "Dame" Moore and his team are offering the same menu available at the other locations, but with a counter-service model to accommodate the rush of students and downtown lunchtime diners. Other than that, the Dame's experience remains the same as it was when the first Dame's Chicken & Waffles opened in Durham in 2010.

**P.S.** Get the maple pecan schmear.

## Down Time

This late-night bar and pizza spot transitioned under new management in May, and the new vibes are immaculate.

**TIP:** Mark your calendars for Tequila Tuesdays for half-price tequila and \$7 margarita fishbowls. Or try your hand at beer Olympics every Thursday night for \$2 beers and \$10 pitchers. There's also Mario Kart, cornhole, flip cup, stack cup, Jenga, UNO, darts ... the list goes on!

## Gizmo Brew Works

This chic taproom, complete with 50 taps and food delivery service from partnering restaurants, opened at the peak of the pandemic in July 2020 in the old Ramshead Rathskeller restaurant space.

**TIP:** We recommend grabbing its signature honey wheat and swinging in for Monday Movie Night or Taco Tuesdays, where you can get \$10 for a pint and three Bandido's tacos.

## GoodFellows

Order a spicy pickleback, and if you like them as much as we do, join the underground bar's Pickleback Club – one pickleback = one point, and 100 points gets you a pickleback party with a free keg. You're welcome.

## Greek Yeero

Nothing beats made-from-scratch gyro, especially at 2 a.m. after a couple of drinks. Add this to your list of late-night spots in Chapel Hill.

**TIP:** Oh, and don't skip the pistachio baklava.

## Hibachi & Company

Affordable. Fast. Delicious.

**TIP:** This budget-friendly spot offers hibachi and teriyaki entrees primarily under \$10 – and, they don't skimp on the quantity of food either.

## Imbibe

Looking for a little taste of NOLA? This is the place.

**TIP:** There's live jazz on Mondays and Wednesdays, and the menu rotates based on seasonality and quality, so every dining experience is unique. Like, have you tried gluten-free falafel fries or crawfish cheese curds? We think not.

## Insomnia Cookies

Got the perpetual late-night sugar cravings? Us too.

**TIP:** Order the classic M&M cookies and get a pint of the birthday cake ice cream ... delivered to your doorstep.

## Kurama Sushi and Noodle Express

Delicious. Easy. Quick. That's all there is to it.

**TIP:** Cheap sushi train.

## Linda's Bar & Grill

This underground bar has been a Chapel Hill staple since 1976. It's loud enough for a good time but quiet enough to have a conversation.

**TIP:** Go for the loaded sweet potato tots. Stay for the Tuesday night trivia. And if you dare, snort the infamous birthday shot.



# MORE EAT & DRINK

## Moge Tee

Unlike other bubble tea spots, Moge Tee uses natural ingredients and organic milk, which make their drinks healthier and taste better. Plus, you get a cute cup with cat ears or one with a heart.

**TIP:** Customer favorites include the cheese foam dragonfruit tea, strawberry cheese tea, brown sugar bubble milk tea, purple yam bubble milk tea and superfruit green tea.

## Pirate Captain

East Franklin Street's newest and only ramen-focused restaurant is all the rage during the colder months, but did you know they added new menu options this summer?

**TIP:** The beef cold noodles and spicy chicken cold noodles are perfect for this dry North Carolina heat. And don't forget the slushies, which are available in five fruity flavors. (FYI, it's closed every Sunday through July 31.)

## Time-Out

Friends come and go, semesters begin and end, but Time-Out is always open 24/7.

**TIP:** In fact, the restaurant was the first in Chapel Hill to stay open around the clock. It probably goes without saying, but order the legendary chicken cheddar biscuit that was featured on "Man v. Food."

## TRU

Not too pricey. Customizable healthy options. Cozy outdoor terrace. And most importantly, wine. This deli is one of the best – if not the best – for a laid back meal with friends or a weekday wine-down after work.

**TIP:** Don't skip half-price wine bottles on Sundays and \$5 pints on Monday.

## Shanghai Dumpling

This is as close as you can get to dim sum in Chapel Hill.

**TIP:** The fatty soup dumplings are a crowd favorite.

## Still Life

Chapel Hill's premier nightclub and entertainment complex with rooftop bars and breathtaking views of downtown.

**TIP:** This party spot includes a 25+ rooftop lounge with elevator access

## Sup Dogs

Since 2019, this veritable hot dog emporium has won the title for the nation's best college bar by Barstool Sports three out of four years.

**TIP:** Order the world-class bacon cheese fries with an Orange Sup Crush (and you get to keep the cup!). You won't regret it.

## Sutton's Drug Store

The pharmacy-turned-old-fashioned diner first opened in 1923, and the interior has stayed mostly the same, with pictures of customers and Tar Heel greats lining the walls. The menu features familiar names like Roy's Reuben and the Dean Dome Deluxe, so you really feel immersed in everything UNC. And no individual item is more than \$8.

**TIP:** Our recommendation? Pay extra to get the potato munchers on the side.

## Top of the Hill

Pop in on Thirsty Thursdays for \$3 blueberry wheats and \$5 Kansas City ice waters.

**TIP:** And do yourself a favor and order some lizard chips while you're at it. Then snag a table on the patio and take in the best view of Franklin Street from this third-story restaurant and brewery.

## YaYa Tea

This Japanese cafe offers an extensive tea selection, from refreshing fruit teas to creamy milk teas. We recommend the taro bubble tea and the takoyaki, which is dressed with sweet sauce, streaks of Kewpie mayonnaise, green seaweed flecks and shavings of dried bonito.

**TIP:** The rack of Asian snacks, including imported Japanese Kit Kats, is a huge plus.

# CAROLINA CLASSICS



UNC fanatics could spend a whole day on East Franklin Street finding the latest college fits, hopping on a college tour, then concluding the day with a beer at the best sports-watching watering hole.

## Classic Carolina

A fitting name for the clothing store, which has offered all sorts of creative Tar Heel T-shirts for the last 18 years.

## Four Corners

Since opening in 1979, this bar and grill has remained the eatery most associated with UNC sports. Basketball, football, whatever it is – 20 high-definition TVs offer the best game experience possible, with hundreds of patrons donning their favorite jerseys year-round.

**TIP:** From the reasonably-priced menu, we recommend the garlic cheese fries with bacon. And on Thursdays, snagging the \$5 boneless wings, \$3 well drinks and \$5 Long Island iced teas.

## Johnny TShirt

Shop for your Tar Heel gear here and a percentage from every UNC product goes back to the university for academic scholarships and athletic programs.

## Shrunken Head

This sportswear store was the first of its kind when it opened in 1969 – and its most enduring. Shops popped up and disappeared around it over the years, even a Gap that had moved in down the street couldn't cut it.

**TIP:** But this store, which offers UNC fanatics clothing, memorabilia, kitsch and memories, is still here decades later managed by the same family for generations.

## UNC Visitors Center

This relatively new location opened its new, tech-savvy location on East Franklin Street in 2020. Situated next to Porthole Alley, this tangible connection of town and gown couldn't be in a more iconic setting.

**TIP:** Modern touchscreen technology allows visitors to create their own experiences, from learning about notable Tar Heels to texting themselves directions to spots they've identified on an interactive campus map.



# FAMILY FUN

Yes, Chapel Hill is home to award-winning chefs and restaurants, beautiful tree-lined streets and historic districts, boutique shops, and of course, UNC with its iconic stone walls and Old Well ... but did you know that Chapel Hill is also very family friendly? No matter the time of year, you can find activities suitable for kids of all ages.

## Ackland Art Museum

This UNC-run space is one of North Carolina's most important cultural resources, featuring more than 20,000 works of art. Both permanent and rotating exhibits include kid-friendly audio guides, virtual tours, interactive lessons and learning opportunities. If you're looking for a more hands-on activity, the museum's weekly Art Adventures on Saturdays provide kids the opportunity to create take-home treasures related to the latest exhibit in an adjacent art studio.

**TIP:** Check out the new interactive art piece, or "spatial gesture," on its terrace that features magenta arches and iridescent glass. Families are invited to climb, play and interact with the installation.



## Epilogue Books and Chocolate Brews

This bookstore and Spanish-style chocolatería opened right before the pandemic. Co-owner Jaime Sanchez wants customers to "enjoy a little piece of my Mexico that I grew up with." Expect everything from churros and tricolored shortbread called polvorones to intricate buñuelos dusted with powdered sugar.

**TIP:** Come for the paperbacks, stay for the pastries.

## The Gathering Place

Gamers unite! Located above Buena Vibra, this new hangout offers a nice balance between free-to-play games and games and accessories for sale. Plus, there's a 30-tap bar with an eclectic mix of alcoholic and nonalcoholic beverages to get the juices flowing.

**TIP:** The weekly game schedule includes board game night and Magic: The Gathering tournaments on Wednesdays, Dungeons and Dragons and other tabletop roleplaying games on Thursdays, and Flesh and Blood on Saturday mornings.

## Morehead Planetarium & Science Center

The oldest planetarium in the Southeast just got quite the revamp in the last year – \$9.2 million to be exact. It nearly tripled its exhibit space, and now offers 13 exhibits, instead of one or two at a time. We dare say that it's not only fun for kids, but parents too.

**TIP:** Allocate at least two-three hours to truly enjoy the space, and make sure to see the Carolina Skies show.

## Varsity Theatre

This Chapel Hill landmark opened 95 years ago and now operates as a first-run movie theater.

# SHOPPING & SERVICES



Peruse one-of-a-kind stores where the wares are as unique as the shop owners and artisans; where you'll find walls and walls of Tar Heel memorabilia and sportswear, trendy clothing and accessories, flea market and hi-end antiques, and quirky and fun gifts.

## Chapel Hill Sportswear

Another store offering a wide selection of Carolina merchandise. The first floor features university apparel and merchandise, and the second floor is devoted to team apparel.

## Creative Metalsmiths

This jeweler and gallery features rotating exhibits displaying unique, custom designed jewelry and metalwork by 21 artists.

## In The Cut

The fades are tight at this barbershop – no matter who does them.

**TIP:** Ask for Scooter.

## Julian's

The Julian name has been a part of Chapel Hill since Maurice Julian and Mary Julian opened the family's store in 1942. In addition to bringing colorful fashion to Chapel Hill, you can thank Julian's for the classic UNC argyle.

**TIP:** For the uninitiated who are curious, don't let a \$2,000 jacket in the window deter you from coming inside. There's no limit to what third-generation tailor Bart Fox can do.

## The Hemp Store

The first woman- and minority-owned cannabis dispensary in North Carolina sells legal cannabis products, ranging from CBD (which eases muscle aches, reduces anxiety and prevents seizures) to Delta-8 THC (which causes a high similar to other cannabis goods).

**TIP:** Try the free delivery service, which can be used within 20 miles of its location.

## Light Years

This miniature jewelry store focused on affordable accessories is perfect for perusing knick knacks and gifts for well over an hour.

## Salon 135

This hair salon is perfect for quick fuss-free haircuts and last-minute appointments.

**TIP:** The price point is also much less than other salons in the neighborhood for pretty much the same quality of work.

## Underground Printing

Another go-to store for game day T-shirts. It also offers custom printing services for just one or a group.

**TIP:** If you can't make it into town, they have an online store, too.

## University Florist

One of our favorite places for random pop-ins to see what's new since the storefront is ever-changing with fun and unique creations.

**Bonus:** It smells amazing and there's a wide succulent selection, too. This is the place for artistic flower arrangements and wrapped bouquets.