

Middle Tennessee

By Sarah Miller

A Country Music and Eating Adventure

Springtime brings mild temperatures and longer days,

setting the stage for memorable music and eating adventures in Middle Tennessee. Nashville, the state capital, is at the center of the playlist, where you can kick back to live music while filling up on a classic Southern meat-and-three lunch. That's a choice of meat, like fried chicken, country-fried steak, meatloaf, pork chops, or fried catfish, with three side dishes! Still hungry? For dinner, dress up and hit a high-end steak house and whiskey bar. Nashville's restaurant scene is as burgeoning as the country-music hopefuls that flock here.

NASHVILLE'S FOOD STARS

Fried chicken and drinking at honky-tonks are the basis of many country songs, so it's no surprise that country-music themed, celebrity-owned restaurants and bars thrive in Nashville, including Miranda Lambert's **Casa Rosa**, Garth Brook's **Friends in Low Places Bar & Honky-Tonk** with a menu inspired by his wife, Trisha Yearwood, **Dolly's Wine Bar**, and Morgan Wallen's **This Bar and Tennessee Kitchen**.

Nashville's other star-worthy food spots, like the **Loveless Cafe**, are famous for really good food. In 1951, Lon and Annie Loveless served crispy fried chicken, country ham, and pillowy biscuits to hungry travelers on Highway 100. Today, the tradition continues in the old Loveless home under the neon sign.

For more neon nostalgia, **Elliston Place Soda Shop** dates back to 1939. It's known for thick milkshakes, legendary burgers, and heavenly sky-high meringue-topped pies. Kids love sipping old-fashioned phosphate sodas on swivel stools. Linda Melton, known locally as "Ms. Linda" and "The Pie Lady," has baked the soda shop's pies for 30 years using her family recipes.

In Nashville's historic Germantown, **Monell's** oozes Southern charm while serving up all-you-can-eat favorites like corn pudding, mashed potatoes, and turnip greens. "Menus change, but our cast-iron skillet-fried chicken is always on the menu, even for breakfast," says owner Michael King. "We serve almost 18 tons of chicken a month." At Monell's, banana pudding is served before dinner. "Life is short, eat dessert first," says King. Guests fill tables of twelve and dine next to strangers. It's part of the experience, along with no cell phones and no reservations. Monell's motto is, "Come as strangers, leave as friends."

If you hanker for BBQ, head to **Peg Leg Porker**, named among the 2025 Top 50 BBQ Joints in the South, by *Southern Living*. Pitmaster Carey Bringle wins top honors for his Memphis-style, dry-rub ribs at this counter service spot in Nashville's trendy Gulch neighborhood.

If you like it hot, **Prince's Hot Chicken** dishes up a spicy story: Founder Thornton Prince loved women and fried chicken—maybe too much. His girlfriend thought she'd teach him a lesson by making his chicken so spicy that it would make him cry. The plan backfired. He loved it! Prince went on to open Prince's Hot Chicken Shack. One hundred years later, Prince's great niece serves his legendary fried chicken drenched in a scorching blend of spices and topped with dill pickles. Prince's Hot Chicken has seven locations, five in Nashville.

Hattie B's and **Red's Hot Chicken** serve up their own spicy chicken dishes. Taste 'em if you dare!

The Nashville food scene also brims with fresh concepts in interesting historic buildings. For example, **Margot's**, in a renovated 1930s service station, is the place for French and Italian cuisine with a Southern flare. **Husk Nashville**, in the 1880s home of a former Nashville mayor, is known for garden-to-table plates from Tennessee purveyors.

FESTIVALS FOR FOODIES

- **April 25-26, 2026:**
National Cornbread Festival
South Pittsburg, Tennessee
- **Last full week in April:**
World's Biggest Fish Fry
Paris, Tennessee
- **June 20, 2026:**
RC Cola-MoonPie Festival
Bell Buckle, Tennessee
- **July 4, 2026:**
Music City Hot Chicken Festival
Nashville, Tennessee
- **October 3-4, 2026:**
National Banana Pudding Festival
Centerville, Tennessee



ABOVE: Nashville is not only the capital of Tennessee and the mecca of country music, but also the heart of Middle Tennessee's food scene.

OPPOSITE, TOP TO BOTTOM: Modeled after Garth Brooks' hit song, visitors gather at the Friends in Low Places Bar & Honky-Tonk for Southern specialties and live music. At Hattie B's, customers can customize their Nashville Hot Chicken to their desired level of heat.

MORE EATING ADVENTURES

- **Goo Goo for Candy.** Goody marshmallow nougat, caramel, and peanut goodness covered in milk chocolate—that’s a Goo Goo Cluster—Nashville’s famous round candy bar since 1912. Design your own custom cluster in downtown Nashville.
- **Chocolate Trip.** Taste and tour at the Olive & Sinclair Chocolate Co. in Nashville, a small-batch artisan chocolate maker since 2007.
- **Campfire Cooking.** Shop for made-in-Tennessee Lodge cast-iron cookware and recipe books to add to your Airstream kitchen. Lodge has factory stores in South Pittsburg, Lynchburg, Pigeon Forge, and Sevierville.
- **Feast in a Stream.** Literally dine on a table with a creek running through it. Savor a four-course, chef-curated dinner in Leiper’s Fork benefiting the Harpeth Conservancy.
- **Lunch 101.** Grins, on the beautiful Vanderbilt University campus, is Nashville’s oldest certified kosher vegetarian restaurant. No meal plan needed!
- **Wine and Dine.** Belle Meade, a historic plantation, houses Nashville’s oldest and one of its finest wineries.
- **Experience Tennessee Whiskey.** Guided whiskey tours depart from Nashville to Lynchburg with sips at the famous Jack Daniels Distillery.
- **Walk Eat Nashville.** Take a walking tour with local food experts around one of Nashville’s iconic neighborhoods where you can sample some of its best kept culinary secrets.

At **Lockeland Table**, in a 1930s-era brick dry goods store, expect inventive Southern cuisine, like house-made empanadas with chimichurri sauce, strip steaks with blistered tomatoes and green beans, and chocolate chip skillet cookies topped with vanilla bean gelato. It’s an East Nashville neighborhood favorite, where music celebrities blend in with everyone else. Most kitchen ingredients and liquor at the bar is locally sourced. “We visit every single farm. We even have a specific farm, White Squirrel, that grows just for us,” says owner Cara Graham. “We hope you leave feeling like you just received a warm hug.”

And then there’s **Puckett’s Restaurant**. Originally a grocery store, Puckett’s is now a chain of restaurants in Tennessee and Alabama, including Nashville. The original is in Franklin, about 30 minutes away. It’s got a bit of everything Middle Tennessee—live music with meat-and-three, BBQ, and cobbler. The interior looks like a market with shelves of Dolly Parton cake mix, canned tomatoes, and a produce display. It’s tempting to think these items are for sale, but they’re really for the chef’s use or decoration.



Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp



Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp



Peg Leg Porker



Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp

CLOCKWISE, FROM CENTER:

Prince’s Hot Chicken is the original when it comes to Nashville Hot Chicken. Monell’s serves dessert first, including classic banana pudding and made-from-scratch pies and cakes that change daily. Family-owned Peg Leg Porker offers mouth-watering, belly-filling Tennessee BBQ. Elliston Place Soda Shop has been Nashville’s place for old-fashioned phosphate sodas, ice cream, and hearty bites since 1939.



Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: At Husk Nashville, dine in the refurbished 1880s home of a former Nashville mayor. Falls Creek Falls is a short hike or bike ride from the restaurant at Falls Creek Falls State Park. Lockeland Table uses local ingredients like this bone-in pork chop with Tennessee smoked cheddar, mac-and-cheese, braised greens, and Tennessee chow chow, a sweet, spicy Southern vegetable relish.

BEYOND NASHVILLE

Outside Nashville, you can find enticing restaurants off-the-beaten path, tucked into forests and along lakes, rivers, and waterfalls. Small-town diners still make plump, homemade biscuits, Tennessee whisky flows, and Southern hospitality and farm-fresh ingredients take center stage amidst a breathtaking natural backdrop.

Middle Tennessee has a distinct geography, different from the rugged Appalachian mountains of eastern Tennessee and the plains of western Tennessee. It’s an expansive hilly region where fertile farms encircle the flat Nashville Basin. Three of Tennessee’s six state resort parks are located in Middle

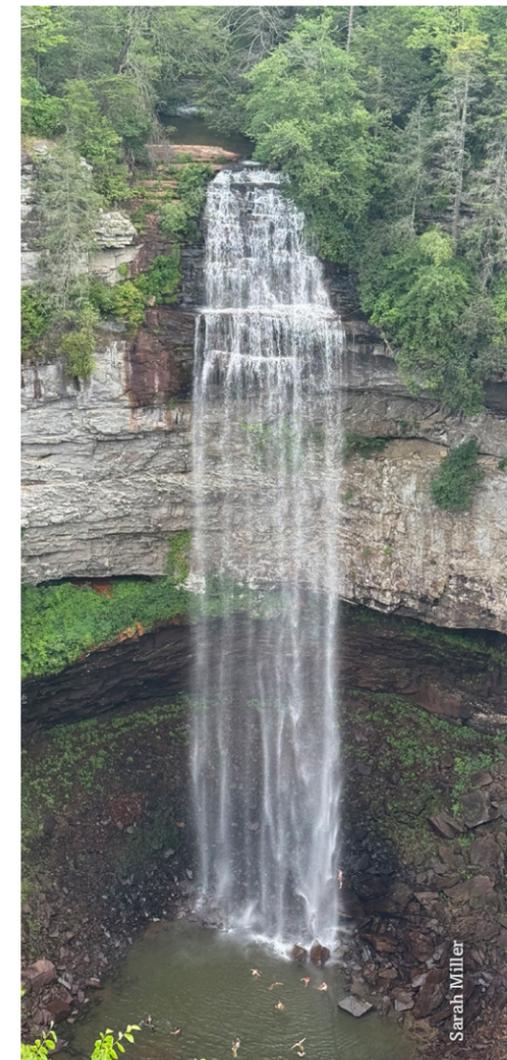
Tennessee—Montgomery Bell State Park, Henry Horton State Park, and Falls Creek Falls State Park. Scenic RV sites coupled with lodge restaurants make these resort parks the perfect choice for Airstream-foodies.

Forty minutes south of Nashville, the lodge restaurant in **Montgomery Bell State Park** overlooks Lake Acorn and serves Tennessee favorites like a country ham platter, catfish basket, and southern fried pies.

Falls Creek Falls State Park, in Spencer, is the largest and most visited state park in Tennessee. Its restaurant is ideal for lakeside sunsets. Instead of rolls before dinner, they whet your appetite with



Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp



Sarah Miller



Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp

ABOVE: Puckett's is a Nashville staple for meat-and-three, sweet tea, and live music.

INSET: Loveless' legendary biscuits, served with homemade jam, are available for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Stop by the old hotel that's now a gift shop to buy Loveless biscuit mix to make in your Airstream.



Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp

hot little hushpuppies in a basket. Their Nashville hot chicken sandwich is sized for a linebacker, and their made-from-scratch banana pudding is pure Southern comfort, a welcome treat after a day checking out the seven waterfalls and numerous other cascades in this 29,800-acre park.

Overlooking the Duck River in Chapel Hill, the restaurant at **Henry Horton State Park** delights diners with its savory entrees, including catfish and ribeye. Yet, its sides and desserts—smoked gouda grits, pimento cheese dip, succotash, sweet potato fries, pineapple upside-down cake, seasonal cobbler, and of course, Tennessee banana pudding—are what sing the songs of Middle Tennessee's flavors. 📺

ALUMAPALOOZA • 15

An owner's best learning opportunity

- Meet hundreds of other Airstreamers
- Enjoy great music and performances
- Learn about your Airstream from experts
- See Airstreams being made

Campsites at the factory are very limited and a sell-out is likely! Book early to avoid disappointment. Early cancellations are just \$25, so reserve your space now!

Register online at alumapalooza.com or call **813-200-8877**



@alumapalooza

SEPT 2-7, 2025 • JACKSON CENTER, OHIO