

## Fresh Favorites

If barbecue doesn't tickle your ribs, try these local specialties:

### Brave New Restaurant

At this eatery tucked away in an office building in the Riverdale area, owners Peter and Marie Brave deliver perennial menu favorites, such as Grilled Lamb Noisette, in a casual, open-kitchen atmosphere. Go for the tilapia broiled in butter, drizzled with a Grand Marnier *beurre blanc*, and served with citrus orzo. [bravenewrestaurant.com](http://bravenewrestaurant.com)

### Capi's

Dine under a giant oak tree with limbs spread over the bar at this hip, fusion restaurant. Capi Peck's innovative selections—Latin, American and Mediterranean-inspired small plates, such as the True Blue Crab Cake served with lemon aioli—are perfect to share. Or try mac and cheese made with orecchiette, white Cheddar, Gruyère, and béchamel sauce, topped with ciabatta crumbs. [capisrestaurant.com](http://capisrestaurant.com)

### Ferneau

Fish is flown in daily to this sleek, West Coast-style restaurant in historic Hillcrest. Chef Donnie Ferneau's improvisational, seasonal menu uses the freshest, local ingredients. Watch for grilled salmon on sweet corn chile pudding, with lime, cilantro, and tortilla sauce, or try the Southern-fried dill pickles with black pepper-Parmesan aioli from the tapas menu. [ferneaurrestaurant.com](http://ferneaurrestaurant.com)

### Ristorante Capeo

Valedictorian of his class at the Italian Culinary Institute for Foreigners, chef Eric Isaac serves classic Italian fare in the historic Argenta area of North Little Rock. Make your own history when you order his ancient Roman recipe for spaghetti carbonara, a creamy dish made with egg, pancetta, and pecorino cheese. [capeo.us](http://capeo.us)

# Eat



Saucy, spicy, or sweet:  
When it comes to barbecue,  
Arkansas is hard to beat.

ASK FOR BARBECUE across the nation and you'll get a different taste in every state, from molasses-sweet to pepper-spicy. Within striking distance of Kansas City, Texas, and Memphis, Arkansas incorporates them all into an eclectic style all its own.

"In Texas, it's all about beef, chuck wagons, and onion and pickle bars," says Mike Blasingame, co-owner of Whole Hog Café ([wholehogcafe.com](http://wholehogcafe.com)). "To the east, from Memphis to the Carolinas, it's mostly pork. We're some of each, with a healthy dose of chicken thrown in for good measure."

There's no one style of Arkansas barbecue, but a few things stand out. First, the meat is rarely ever exposed to high or direct heat. Instead, it's smoked at low temperatures over long periods of time—up to 18 hours for a 175-pound pig cooked "whole hog" style. A local institution, Sims Bar-B-Que ([simsbarbeque-ar.com](http://simsbarbeque-ar.com)) is an

exception. Sims hickory-smokes their ribs (pictured above) over an open flame pit, and then serves them either wet (with sauce) or dry (seasonings only).

Speaking of sauce, most Arkansas restaurants serve a Southern-style tomato-based variety, never thick or syrupy. Notes of vinegar and pepper are blended in varying degrees with Kansas City-style sweetness, usually sorghum molasses.

Whole Hog Café sets tables with a roll of paper towels and a six-pack of house-made sauces. Don't worry; an explanation of each one is on the container. (We like No. 3, a tomato-vinegar sauce with extra spice.) At Sims, you'll get a sweet, dark-brown, mustard-based sauce, made from a secret family recipe passed down since 1937. No matter which sauce you prefer, you're sure to go hog wild over Arkansas barbecue.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY NANCY NOLAN

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