



SOUTH'S
BEST

Soda Fountains

BY GINNY HEARD

Once treating almost every Southern town to frosty concoctions, soda fountains are harder to find these days. But a dedicated handful of purveyors has carefully maintained the classic style, food, service, and, in some cases, even the prices over the years to carry on a bit of history and help revive the nostalgia of the classic soda fountains and the artistry of the soda jerk. Here are a few favorite spots around the South to savor

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Photo courtesy The Pickwick



Photo courtesy Adam White

Brent's Drugs

JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI

Brent's Drugs opened in 1946 in the first shopping center in Mississippi. The soda fountain was originally just a side note to the pharmacy—while you were waiting for your prescription to be filled, you could whet your whistle with a milkshake or soda. Since owner Brad Reeves acquired the store in 2009, its days as a pharmacy have come to an end, but the soda fountain has become so much more—a community gathering place with a deep sense of history. Brad's refurbishments included extra seating, counter space, and a kitchen area, but maintained its retro personality. With the addition of a speakeasy-style cocktail bar, Apothecary, in the old pharmacy area, this spot has become an exciting part of Jackson's Fondren neighborhood.

655 Duling Ave.
601.366.3427
 brentsdrugs.com

The Pickwick Pharmacy & Soda Fountain

GREENVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA

Endear yourself to the Greenville, South Carolina, locals by inviting them to meet you at the Pickwick—a community stalwart that has been in operation since 1933. Owner Kelly Odom's great grandfather took the original sandwich shop and added a pharmacy, which became a larger part of the business. The soda fountain side closed in 1964, but the current generation of owners reopened it and now reproduces the classics that started the community's love for the place—old-fashioned malts, ice cream, fresh-squeezed limeades, and pimiento cheese sandwiches.

3219 Augusta St.
864.277.4180
 thepickwick.net

Old Town Slidell Soda Shop

SLIDELL, LOUISIANA

Though it closed in 2005 after damage from Hurricane Katrina, Old Town Slidell was reopened in August 2012. (The side of the building still bears drawings that indicate the water line from the storm.) They serve everything from banana splits to egg salad sandwiches here, but you can also find Louisiana classics like muffulettas and po' boys on the menu.

301 Cousin St.
985.649.4806
 slidellsodashop.com



Photo courtesy Gary S. Chapman

Chapman Drug Company

HAPEVILLE, GEORGIA

A family of pharmacists has operated Chapman Drug Company since 1921, with fourth generation owner Derek Chapman now running the show. While the soda fountain has been around since the beginning, it changed with the times until 10 years ago, when the Chapmans restored the original look, complete with Georgia marble countertops. Derek's classic menu and nostalgic prices have made this place a large part of the community, filling it with folks ordering malts, milkshakes, limeades, lime sours, and glass bottled sodas. With the old-fashioned menu, prices, and especially service, it's hard to stay away for long.

615 N. Central Ave.
404.761.1136
 chapmandrug.com

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Photo courtesy Mahlon Yeager Photo + Film



Photo courtesy Don Trowbridge



Photo courtesy Woolworth Walk

Pitt Street Pharmacy

MT. PLEASANT, SOUTH CAROLINA

Pitt Street Pharmacy has been in operation since 1937, and in its current location since 1952, when it gained its traditional 1950s-style soda fountain. Current owner Kim Richardson's goal is to keep the soda fountain just the way it was—in fact, when he bought the business in 1996, long-time customers told him that if he changed a thing, they would run him out of town! While the customers here chow down on everything from egg salad to burgers, Pitt Street's real claim to fame is its grilled cheese sandwich—or at least the eating contests it inspires. The current record holds at an impressive 27 grilled cheese sandwiches. It's a good thing this soda fountain still has a pharmacy attached—the record-holder no doubt needed an antacid afterward!

111 Pitt St.
843.884.4051
 pittstreetpharmacy.com

Trowbridge's Ice Cream Bar

FLORENCE, ALABAMA

Filled with classic style and signage, Trowbridge's Ice Cream Bar is an exciting place to walk into—and not just because you're drawn in by the sweet smell of ice cream. With seafoam green upholstery and antique Coca-Cola signs, this place is filled with character. These nice folks serve up ice cream, milkshakes, sandwiches, and more, including a few local favorites, like orange-pineapple ice cream, and their banana sandwich—classically served with mayo, but recently offered with peanut butter as well.

316 N. Court St.
256.764.1503



Elliston Place Soda Shop

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

Going strong since 1939, Elliston Place is the oldest continuously operating restaurant in Nashville. In its early days, the owners built a wall to separate the drug store and soda fountain sides of the business. The drug store operated until 1965, but the soda fountain carried on—with the same style and décor maintained today. While they serve up big country breakfasts and meat-and-three options for lunch, they're still known for the classics: milkshakes, banana splits, and homemade pies. This iconic Nashville spot has seen some famous faces, from country music stars to politicians and is one of the most photographed spots in the city.

2111 Ellison Pl.
615.327.1090
 ellistonplacesodashop.com

ADD Drug Store

ATHENS, GEORGIA

This traditional lunch counter is very popular with the community and has become an important social spot for the town. Locals, and especially kids, love to clamber up on the 16 bar stools at the counter, where they have their short-order menu items made right in front of them. Owner Kevin Florence has kept the atmosphere old fashioned and the prices low, and that seems to be exactly what his customers want. While they serve up many burgers, hot dogs, and egg salad sandwiches, try the pimiento cheeseburger—you won't be sorry!

1695 S. Lumpkin St.
706.548.2239
 add-drugstore.com

Palace Drug

MAMMOTH SPRING, ARKANSAS

Palace Drug is located at the head of one of the largest natural springs in the world, and since they opened in 1882, their soda fountain has been satisfying the appetites of pharmacy customers and tourists alike. The owners have maintained a nostalgic atmosphere with bar stools and a classic tufted counter. And while their fresh salads and tasty sandwiches may make you think bistro more than lunch counter, a few scoops of their locally made ice cream in an old-fashioned shake, malt, or sundae lets you know that they're aware some classics should stay the same.

270 Main St.
870.625.3222
 palacedrug.com

Woolworth Walk

ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

Located in the historic F. W. Woolworth building in downtown Asheville, the soda fountain at Woolworth Walk harkens back to its glory days with 1950s flair and many original menu items, like egg crèmes and malted shakes. Rebuilt to resemble the building's original luncheonette, the soda fountain welcomes customers with a long bar dotted with spinning stools. The building itself is now host to an art gallery featuring more than 100 local artists.

25 Haywood St.
828.254.9210
 woolworthwalk.com



Photo courtesy Crystal Hogg



Photos courtesy Long Creative



Griffith & Feil Drug Store and Soda Fountain

KENOVA, WEST VIRGINIA

This small, independent pharmacy is the oldest continuously running business in Kenova, and when it started operations in 1892 it included a soda fountain—until current owner Ric Griffith's father decided it wasn't worth his time and took the counter out. When Ric took over the pharmacy's operation, he wanted the old-fashioned feel of the place back, and he brought that counter right back in. Because he used true antique pieces, this was not an easy task—they had to take the front window out just to get the large soda fountain counter in the building. Their extensive menu includes hand-made sodas, milkshakes, and much more. And while Ric and his father good-naturedly rib each other about who ran the business better, Ric says his dad sure does seem happy sitting at that counter with a frosty treat in hand. 📷

1405 Chestnut St.
304.453.2381
 gfdrug.com

Pop's Ice Cream & Soda Bar

ROANOKE, VIRGINIA

While Pop's has only been around since 2006, all of their machinery and signs are antiques from soda fountains around the country. Here, they make their own sodas with homemade syrup extracts and source their ice cream from a local dairy. Their extensive soda shop menu lists all kinds of soda and ice cream combinations, from the classic to the very unusual, to the make-your-own combo. The owners, husband-and-wife team Brandon Davis and Anna Robertson, work to bring back the nostalgic feel of the soda fountain era and encourage customers to turn off cell phones and enjoy each other's company. Brandon says it's a nice lifestyle—you get to deal with a lot of happy people when you're serving milkshakes and floats!

1916 Memorial Ave. S.W.
540.345.2129

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