

Raleigh's **2019** BEST BARS

Wander Watts and Ward, a sprawling speakeasy, with a Highland Scotch in hand, or relax on the rooftop of Taverna Agora with a refreshing Greek Mule. Knock back a well drink or two at Slim's while you're catching a show or cheer on your team at the Players Retreat with rounds of brews. This year, for the second year in a row, we're highlighting one of our favorite things about Raleigh—its selection of unique bars—as chosen by you, our readers and followers. We've got your wine bars and your dives, your beer-and hotdog hangout and your shopping center-based watering hole boasting the largest whiskey selection in the Southeast (that's Hoppy Endings, for the uninitiated). We've got your LGBTQ bars and your rooftop retreats, your breweries and bottle shops for all you craft beer enthusiasts. We've got your restaurant bar and entertainment destinations, your best new bars on the block and, of course, we've got your favorites overall. Thanks to all who voted in our 2019 Best Bars survey and congratulations to all of our winners; we happily raise a glass to you.

Cheers!

BY LAUREN KRUCHTEN



Dram & Draught



Hoppy Endings



Whiskey Kitchen



Blind Barbour

BEST Overall

- Hoppy Endings
- Watts & Ward
- Blind Barbour
- Whiskey Kitchen
- Dram & Draught

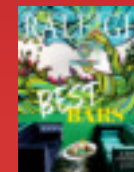


Watts & Ward



Dram & Draught

AS SEEN IN
FEBRUARY 2020



RALEIGH

BEST Cocktail



Stir

Carolina Stamey, Tabletop Media Group

Stir

4242 Six Forks Rd.,
stirraleigh.com

Best known for its hand-cut artisanal ice program, North Hills' STIR features a variety of delicious contemporary cocktails crafted with one of eight unique styles of ice, along with fresh-pressed juices, local herbs, fruits, bitters and syrups. With more than 350 spirits to choose from, you can have your drink just the way you like it. Don't sleep on the food menu, either—the fresh seafood dishes are heavenly.

Watts & Ward

200 S Blount St.
wattsandward.com

Down an inconspicuous flight of stairs on Blount Street, you'll find one of Raleigh's finest speakeasy lounges, furnished with leather sofas, bookshelf-lined brick walls and rustic, wooden, candle-lit tables. The sprawling yet still intimate space is perfect for enjoying 1920s-inspired cocktails and live music every Thursday.

Fox Liquor Bar

237 S Wilmington St.
ac-restaurants.com/fox

Around the corner from Ashley Christensen's Beasley's Chicken and Honey is her solo bar venture, a dimly lit, no frills drinking establishment that boasts simple—yet delicious—cocktails. The menu is organized by glass and ice type, with something for the sweet-loving drinker to the straight-up drinker, to every drinker in between. When hunger strikes, look to AC's comprehensive bar snack selection.

The Haymaker

555 Fayetteville St.
thehaymakerraleigh.com

Vintage decor, dim lighting and hip-hop themed drinks are stars at The Haymaker, a trendy cocktail bar in downtown's City Plaza. Gather your friends in a booth for The Haymaker's signature boozy punch bowls, or pull up a seat at the bar to enjoy whatever seasonal cocktail your bartender is loving at the moment. Every fourth Sunday of the month, a tiki party features tropical-themed drinks, shots and punch bowls.

C. Grace

407 Glenwood Ave.
cgracebar.com

Come for the cocktails, stay for the live jazz. Within C. Grace's low-lit, red-and-black interior, you'll feel as if you've been transported to a 1940s jazz club, complete with cozy velvet booths, vintage lamps and secluded tables. Seasonal house cocktails are undeniably exquisite, crafted with unique ingredients including bee pollen, avocado and dry cider.

BEST Game Day

Carolina Ale House

500 Glenwood Ave.
carolinaalehouse.com

Catch all your favorite sports high above downtown Raleigh at Carolina Ale House's third story location on Glenwood South. For North Carolina games especially, the space buzzes with energy as cheers erupt among crowds gathered around the space's 50 screens. Both the food and drink menus are extensive and there are daily drink specials to boot.

Players' Retreat

105 Oberlin Rd. | playersretreat.net

Players' Retreat is known for many great things—great drinks, great food and a great atmosphere for watching games. The beloved neighborhood bar has served Raleighites since 1951, offering TVs both inside and outside for prime sports viewing. Drinks are reasonably priced and chef Beth Littlejohn's food menu is diverse and ambitious, offering everything from standard tailgating eats, including wings and burgers, to a hand-cut choice ribeye.

Woody's at City Market

205 Wolfe St. | woodycitymarket.com

With 23 new, high-definition TVs, Woody's stakes its claim as Raleigh's No. 1 sports bar.

In addition to lots of nice TVs, Woody's boasts a neighborly, all-are-welcome vibe and daily drink specials. A cold beer served with an order of the signature wings is a winning matchup, even if your team ends up losing.

Tobacco Road Sports Cafe

505 W Jones St.
tobaccoroadsportscafe.com

Located in downtown Raleigh's historic Pow-erhouse building, Tobacco Road features a brewery, restaurant, private event space, game room and patio. The dining room is equipped with several TVs for all sports watching, as well as a giant screen that's visible from the upstairs overlook. Creative beers brewed in-house and an upscale bar menu add to the experience.



Short Walk Wines

Vita Vite

200 Park at North Hills Street; 313 W Hargett Street | vitaviteraleigh.com

Vita Vite's two Raleigh locations—downtown and at North Hills—are ideal for cozying up with a glass or two of wine and a yummy charcuterie plate. The cozy and inviting space is adorned with sofas, standalone tables and outdoor spaces with porch swings and fireplaces. There's no shortage of worldly blends to choose from, whether you're into red, white or sparkling varietals.

Barcelona Wine Bar

430 W Martin Street | barcelonawinebar.com

A lush, greenery-filled patio welcomes patrons to the Dillon's first and only wine bar, an elegant space decorated with rustic, earthy touches. Escape from Raleigh, if only briefly, through an extensive selection of South American wines and more than 25 Spanish-, Mediterranean and South African-inspired tapas, plus build-your-own charcuterie boards. You'll want to come back *una y otra vez*.

Short Walk Wines

123 E Martin Street | shortwalkwines.com

As the name suggests, Short Walk Wines is only a stone's throw from the bustle of downtown Raleigh, the perfect spot to grab a glass with friends before dinner or pick up a bottle to take home. The friendly staff is happy to assist with selecting small batch or estate-grown wines and if they don't have what you're looking for, they don't mind ordering it for you.

The Wine Feed

602 Glenwood Avenue | thewinefeed.com

The Wine Feed delivers delicious wines to Raleighites while educating them on wine regions, grape varietals, food pairings and more, with classes held weekly. Get a taste of what's on offer at the bar, then snag a bottle from one of 13 regions across the globe. A variety of wine clubs welcome those looking to expand their horizons and explore more vino.



Nancy Granados

High Horse

Auntie Betty's

411 W Morgan Street
auntiebettysbar.com

Auntie Betty's, a colorful speakeasy tucked into a corner of Morgan Street Food Hall, is Raleigh restaurateur Niall Hanley's and Watts and Ward mixologist Greg Ewan's newest venture. Raleigh's first gin and absinthe-focused bar is named after Hanley's Irish aunt and features 30 different gins from Ireland, Scotland, England, France, Germany, Japan and the United States, plus more than 10 styles of tonic—ideal for crafting the G&T of your dreams.

Tin Roof

300 Glenwood Avenue
tinroofraleigh.com

Get ready to sing your heart out and dance 'til you drop at Glenwood South's newest live music joint. Tin Roof features bands from all over the country performing every night, as well as guest DJs on the rooftop patio on the weekends. No matter what kind of music you're into, you'll be entertained. The full bar and Southern-inspired "better than bar food" menu keeps dancing guests energized.

High Horse

208 Wolfe Street
highhorsenc.com

Top Chef alum Katsuji Tanabe delivers an eclectic menu of Mexican, Japanese and American-inspired small plates at his playful new restaurant, High Horse, named after the stables that once occupied its location in City Market. The unique wood-fired dining experience is complemented by creative cocktails, each with trendy names such as Thirst Trap, Bumble Swipe and Sorry Not Sorry. You'll want to try them all.

Wye Hill

201 S Boylan Avenue | wyehill.com

Overlooking downtown from the edge of the Boylan Bridge, Wye Hill has one of the best views in the city. The restaurant also brews its own craft beers and offers a chef-driven menu unlike any you'd find at your typical neighborhood bar. The dry hopped kellerpils or coconut stout are unique options to pair with sorghum glazed carrots, seared yellowfin steak or pork belly and peas.

BEST Craft Beer

Trophy

656 Maywood Avenue; 225 Wilmington Street; 827 W. Morgan Street
trophybrewing.com

Each of Trophy's three locations offer unique experiences. Inventive pizzas and beer reign at Trophy's original location on Morgan Street, now expanded to include a taproom highlighting Trophy's sour beers. There's the delectable, Southern-inspired menu at Trophy Tap + Table on Wilmington Street. And, there's the production facility-taproom on Maywood Avenue, offering 12 rotating drafts to enjoy on its sunny patio.

Lynnwood Brewing Concern

4821 Grove Barton Road; 1053 E Whitaker Mill Road | lynnwoodbrewing.beer/wp

The Lynnwood brand was first established in 2004 as Lynnwood Grill, with the small craft brewery added in 2013 in order to serve dedicated customers some of the finest craft beers in the Triangle. Lynnwood Brewing Concern has since expanded to a brewing production facility and taproom at Five Points, churning out award-winning brews crafted with fresh ingredients and original flavors.

Brewery Bhavana

218 S Blount Street | brewerybhavana.com

A brewery, dim sum restaurant, bookstore and flower shop, Bhavana—Sanskrit for "cultivating"—is an ethereal establishment, a consistent reminder of some of life's greatest pleasures. The craft beers are aged in wine barrels, puncheons and foeders to create one-of-a-kind flavors, and you're encouraged to enjoy them with delicious dishes, including pork bao, seafood dumplings and scallion pancakes. Leave with an inspiring book or a beautiful bouquet of flowers.

Crank Arm Brewing

319 W Davie Street | crankarmbrewing.com

Adam Eckhardt, Dylan Selinger and Mike Morris founded Crank Arm in 2013 out of their shared love for quality beer and cycling. While creating great beer is Crank Arm's top priority, the brewery is committed to promoting bicycling culture in Raleigh with cycling nonprofits Oaks & Spokes and Triangle Spokes Group. Come by Wednesdays for the CRANK Club bike ride, followed by a refreshing brew or two.

facebook/boxcarral



Boxcar

BEST Entertainment

Boxcar

330 W Davie Street | boxcarbar.com

Once you start dropping tokens into Boxcar's arcade games, it's hard to stop. More than 100 games comprise the lively space, including classic and modern arcade games, pinball, skee ball, air hockey, Nintendo and more. A full bar keeps gamers going with seasonal cocktails, local liquors and 24 rotating draft selections. An outdoor patio is great for taking a break from all the competition. And, there's free popcorn!

The Pour House Music Hall

224 S Blount Street
thepourhousemusicall.com

A record shop by day and live music venue by night, The Pour House is a staple for good music in Raleigh. Since 1997, the bar and concert hall has attracted musicians of all genres to its stage, from nationally-known rock bands to local and up-and-coming indie groups. Browse the record shop upstairs before heading down for a show paired with one of 30 rotating North Carolina beers on tap or a mixed drink.

Kings Dining & Entertainment

141 Park at N Hills Street
kings-de.com/raleigh

More than just a bowling alley, Kings offers arcade games, billiards, sports and impressive food and drinks, including popular over-the-top milkshakes, elevated cocktails and loaded snack platters. Eighteen neon-lit lanes are available for a "Dine then Bowl" option that's particularly attractive for parties or get-togethers with friends.

Kings

14 W Martin Street
kingsraleigh.com

Benjamin Barwick, Paul Siler, Steve Popson and Cheetie Kumar opened the original Kings in 1999 and it made a splash in Raleigh for touring musicians and music lovers, plus comedy, theater and circus performers. Since Kings moved to its current location, the hip bar continues to attract national and local acts with its improved stage, sound system and full bar.

PLUS Dueling Piano Bar

510 Glenwood Avenue
plusduelingpianobar.com

There's never a dull moment at PLUS Dueling Piano Bar, where two incredibly talented pianists entertain audiences all night with requested songs. You'll find there's almost no song or musical style the talented musicians don't know. PLUS's high energy atmosphere is ideal for singing and dancing with friends on a fun night out, capped off with a full food menu served until 1:45 a.m.



BEST Restaurant

Vidrio

500 Glenwood Avenue
vidrioraleigh.com

Vidrio is part art gallery, part restaurant—colorful glass orbs and dramatic light fixtures surround patrons as they dine on creative Mediterranean dishes including Moroccan beef skewers, grilled halloumi salad and charred octopus. Vidrio's cocktail program is equally impressive, featuring unique, refreshing drinks made with surprising ingredients including pomegranate foam, black lava salt, grenadine pearls and other delicious delights.

Plates Neighborhood Kitchen

301 Glenwood Avenue
plateskitchen.com

Plates prides itself on a locally inspired menu, featuring ingredients sourced from Goat Lady Dairy, Fox Farm & Forage and Locals Seafood. Chef David Mitchell takes traditional Southern dishes and plays them up with international flavors and techniques, while bar manager Chris Brennan creates seasonal cocktails perfect for sipping on the restaurant's spacious outdoor patio.

The Cortez

413 Glenwood Avenue
cortezraleigh.com

Tropical plants and decor set the stage for Chef Oscar Diaz's seafood-oriented menu, influenced by what's available from local seafood purveyors and the NC Farmers Market. A trip to the Glenwood South restaurant isn't complete without a creative, hand-crafted tropical cocktail, a beer or a glass or two from The Cortez's extensive wine list.

Bida Manda

222 S Blount Street
bidamanda.com

Bida Manda, the Sanskrit ceremonial term for father and mother, serves unique dishes within an intimate, warmly lit space, an all-encompassing tribute to owners Vanvisa and Vansana Nolintha's Laotian parents. At the bar, enveloped in natural sticks harvested from the North Carolina mountains, sip on exotic cocktails crafted from fresh juices. At Bida Manda, our connection to the natural world is never far from mind.

The Cortez



House of Hops, Glenwood Ave

BEST Bottle Shop

Tasty Beverage Company

327 W Davie Street | tastybeverageco.com

Tasty's fun-loving vibe is reason enough to visit, but its noteworthy selection of affordably priced beers—available on tap and in bottles and cans—will make you a regular. Tasty slings brews from all over the country, including local favorites, and the shop will also deliver beer right to your front door. Drop by Tasty's Warehouse District location and you'll often find locals enjoying a brew in the taproom or outside on the patio.

State of Beer

401 Hillsborough Street | stateof.beer

State of Beer isn't just a bottle shop, it's a destination for some of the most delicious sandwiches in the city. Chef-driven offerings such as the Jive Turkey Club, Sicilian and the pimento cheese sandwich are great for soaking up beers served in cans or on tap. Rare and special collaboration beers are also available in the shop to take home.

House of Hops

6909 Glenwood Avenue; 2340 Bale Street
houseofhopsnc.com

Keith Bowler and Gary Holt opened House of Hops in 2014 as a family-run beer shop featuring more than 300 bottles and cans and 24 rotating drafts. The casual, neighborly atmosphere attracts patrons for good beer alongside family-friendly events, including trivia and Opinionation, a survey-based game similar to Family Feud. A different local food truck offers bites at the Glenwood South location Tuesdays through Sundays.

The Hop Yard

1141 Falls River Avenue | thehopyardnc.com

This community-oriented bottle shop and tasting room features 18 rotating taps of various beers, ciders and sours. You might find a fruited gose one day and a white stout the next, lending an air of excitement to your experience whenever you drop by. Several rows of bottles and cans round out The Hop Yard's offerings; weekly events, tap takeovers and bottle shares mean you can discover even more unique brews.

BEST Dive

Slim's

227 S Wilmington Street
slimsraleigh.com

Blink and you might miss it (though you'd miss out on some great entertainment).

Slim's, an unassuming dive bar-slash-Raleigh institution nestled among the storefronts on South Wilmington Street is downtown's oldest music venue, hosting local bands since 1999. Vibe with the music, chill on the patio and enjoy a full bar with drinks at wallet-friendly prices.

Lucky B's

609 Tucker Street | luckybsbar.com

Part sports bar, part dive bar, Lucky B's, nicknamed the "classiest dive bar in Raleigh," always offers a good time. A jukebox, photo booth, bar games and expansive year-round patio means there's something for everyone. From Monday to Sunday, enjoy specials on well drinks, beers and shots, and stick around Monday nights for entertaining karaoke hosted by DJ Ross.

The Goat

5111 Western Boulevard

Over in west Raleigh, The Goat is known for its drink specials, friendly (sometimes rowdy) neighborhood bar atmosphere and countless customer-decorated dollar bills that cover the one-room space from floor to ceiling. The spot is great for grabbing a beer after work on the patio, getting together with friends for a round of shots—let the shot wheel make that decision for you—or board games on the weekend.

The Cardinal

713 N West Street
facebook.com/TheCardinalBar

You won't find any fancy cocktails or velvet couches at The Cardinal, but you will find some of Raleigh's best hot dogs. The dogs—regular or veggie—are braised in a local beer on tap and grilled by your bartender, then loaded up with your choice of toppings, and best enjoyed with a brew or shot of house vodka (and whatever it's being infused with) behind the bar.



Facebook/thedistrictraleigh

BEST LGBTQ

The District

317 W Morgan Street
thedistrictraleigh.com

The District urges all to “come as you are,” whether you’re there for a quick beer, cocktail or late night order of the beloved Totchos (tater tot nachos). The modern aesthetic sets the tone for easy drinking before or after a night out, with a broad menu of exotic wines, original house libations and local drafts. Or while away a weekend afternoon people watching on The District’s outdoor patio.

Ruby Deluxe

415 S Salisbury Street | rubydeluxeraleigh.com

Ruby Deluxe isn’t affectionately known as the Sparkle Dungeon for nothing. The stage at the popular LGBTQIA bar is decked out in a glittery silver curtain that sets the backdrop for drag shows, DJs, queery-oke and other dazzling events. The glitter-filled basement also boasts arcade games, pinball machines, pool tables and an outdoor patio.

Legends Nightclub

330 W Hargett Street | legends-club.com

Walk past Legends any given night and you’ll hear dance music blaring, see neon lights flashing and feel the all-around thrilling energy coming from Raleigh’s first and longest-standing LGBTQ club. For more than 25 years, Legends has been the night spot for thousands of guests, from drag show-goers and go-go dancers to live DJs and themed parties. Duck into The Tuck, Legends’ speakeasy, for craft cocktails and absinthe drinks.

Flex

2 S West Street | flex-club.com

Check out Flex for fun, LGBTQ-friendly entertainment in downtown Raleigh. The basement bar welcomes all to enjoy karaoke Sundays through Wednesdays, bingo, go-go dancers and weekly themed drag shows every Thursday. Grab a drink while you enjoy the show, and make sure you have extra cash to tip your favorite performers.

BEST Rooftop

Level7

101 Park at North Hills
Street, 7th Floor
level7roofbar.com

AC Hotel’s Level 7 rooftop bar offers stunning views of North Hills in an exquisite, modern space equipped with plush couches and cozy tables both inside and out on the patio. The bar is made for lounging while enjoying a contemporary house cocktail, beer or wine, and the European- influenced tapas menu is perfect for sharing with friends or a date.

Taverna Agora

326 Hillsborough Street
tavernaagora.com

Taverna Agora transports diners and drinkers to a warm Mediterranean island with its expansive, winterized rooftop patio that overflows with lush foliage and ceramic pots of olive trees. Refreshing cocktails use Greek-inspired ingredients, such as baklava syrup and ouzo, while a variety of Greek wines and beers tempt non-liquor drinkers.

The Raleigh Times Bar

14 E Hargett Street
raleightimesbar.com

Overlooking the bustling streets of downtown Raleigh, Raleigh Times’ homey rooftop patio is an ideal spot for people watching while enjoying a meal and a drink. Elevated dishes round out a classic menu of bar snacks, sandwiches and salads, best served up with an IPA, pale ale, sour, cider or one of Raleigh Times’ many Belgian beers.



Whiskey Kitchen

BEST Whiskey

Dram & Draught

1 Glenwood Avenue
dramanddraught.com

Since relocating to a larger space at the bottom floor of One Glenwood, Dram & Draught’s premier whiskey collection has expanded by 30 percent. You’ll find the same black and dark brown wood details as in Dram’s previous location, as well as the same fun atmosphere and friendly bartenders, plus a new slew of sensational cocktails.

Whiskey Kitchen

201 W Martin Street | whiskey.kitchen

Whiskey Kitchen’s spacious open floor plan, which extends to a delightful outdoor patio, means there’s no bad seat in the house. But when you’re choosing from a selection of more than 400 whiskeys, we recommend taking a seat at the bar. Whether you take your whiskey neat, on the rocks or straight up, pair it with one of Whiskey Kitchen’s Southern dishes—the fried brussels sprouts are a local favorite.

Hoppy Endings

8320 Litchford Road
hoppyendings.net

Hoppy Endings is a lot of things—a bottle shop, cocktail bar and a much loved neighborhood gathering place, but it may be best known for its vast bourbon, whiskey and scotch selections. With 1,500 bottles and counting, Hoppy Endings has the largest whiskey collection in the Southeast. Hoppy Ending offers more than 500 beers from local and international breweries and 17 rotating taps for enjoying within its bottle-lined walls.

Foundation

213 Fayetteville Street
foundationnc.com

In 2009, Foundation opened as downtown Raleigh’s first craft cocktail bar; over the next decade, it grew into a popular destination for excellent seasonal drinks and a fun, cavelike interior with industrial decor. Go on a Sunday for Longleaf Swine BBQ’s late night pop-up and a round of Foundation’s innovative cocktails.

The Blind Barbour

3055 Medlin Drive | blindbarbour.com

Don’t let its modest strip mall storefront deter you; The Blind Barbour is an approachable neighborhood watering hole, jointly named after co-founder Joey Barbour and the Prohibition-era custom of buying a ticket to “see the blind pig” in exchange for a drink. The cocktail menu offers creative drinks including The B.O.B. (Bourbon Over Bourbon) and Americano Martini; 182 whiskeys and counting offer something for a simpler crowd.



Foundation