



Cricket Tacos are a hit at Never Blue

HENDERSONVILLE'S UNEXPECTED FOOD FINDS

DISCOVER NEW CULINARY TRENDS IN THE N.C. MOUNTAINS

By Sandra Chambers

From cricket tacos to fried chicken, handmade donuts and award-winning desserts, this small North Carolina mountain town is a foodie destination just waiting to be discovered.

HENDOUGH CHICKEN & DONUTS

This cozy, down-home restaurant known for its handmade donuts and chicken is the brainchild of Paul and Sarah Klaasen, who met while chefs at the famous Biltmore Estate in Asheville, N.C. Featuring the ultimate sweet/savory combination, HenDough pairs fried chicken with specialty donut flavors like lemon rosemary and malted chocolate stout. Early birds will enjoy breakfast specialties, such as Donut French Toast or Egg in a Basket (two eggs in a donut basket, fried chicken, bacon and Jalapeno Maple syrup). hendough.com

NEVER BLUE

Although this downtown Hendersonville restaurant features an extensive, internationally-inspired menu, it has garnered a unique place among foodies for its tapas and creative tacos, such as the cricket, goat and Korean barbecue duck tacos. While menu items change frequently, Chef Jesse Roque says the cricket taco is one of her husband's favorites from growing up in Mexico. In addition to tacos and tapas, the restaurant features

Southern highlights, like Crab Cakes with Cajun remoulade, Smoked Gouda-Sour Cream Grits, and Shrimp and Grits. Chef Roque prides herself on using locally sourced ingredients from area manufacturers and growers. Roque, who was originally trained as a pastry chef, was named the 2016 North Carolina Chef of the Year by the state's Restaurant and Lodging Association. theneverblue.com

OLD ETOWAH SMOKEHOUSE

Barbecue is a time-honored tradition in the South, steeped in the history of the agrarian culture of North Carolina. Old Etowah Smokehouse maintains one of the few and last wood fired pits in Western North Carolina, where they prepare whole hog barbecues, briskets, ribs, chicken and sausages using local hardwood. However, while barbecue is a great reason for eating at Old Etowah Smokehouse, it's not what owner Chef Robert Hammond is best known for. Hendersonville's native culinary guru is a prized pastry chef whose work has been featured on "The Oprah Winfrey Show." His recipes have also shown up on the pages of *Bon Appétit* magazine. With such an acclaimed background, it's only expected that Hammond would whip up some dessert specialties, such as the Signature Coconut Cake, S'mores Cheesecake and Caramel Apple Bourbon Cheesecake. oldetowah.com

Photo of cricket tacos courtesy of Never Blue; sweet/savory combo by Sam Dean



HenDough features the ultimate sweet/savory combo



S'mores Cheesecake at Old Etowah Smokehouse