

Plainsman's Choice: Best food

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JOSHUA FISHER | PHOTOGRAPHER
Tacos from Taco Mama in Downtown Auburn.

Auburn is filled with many different restaurants, ranging from local gems to chain restaurants that are universally loved.

The following establishments are the top picks for The Auburn Plainsman's food categories.

BEST TACOS: TACO MAMA

This Downtown Auburn favorite dishes up fresh, craveable tacos with a build-your-own approach, letting one customize their perfect bite. They also serve burritos, nachos, quesadillas and have an option to rent a catered taco bar. Don't be surprised to see a line stretching out the door — their delicious offerings and lively vibe make it a consistently popular spot.

From classic fillings to creative twists, paired with their signature margaritas, Taco Mama offers a fun and flavorful experience that keeps locals coming back for more.

BEST BAR AND DRINKS: SKYBAR CAFE

SkyBar, located at 136 W Magnolia Ave., is a hot spot for students to spend their weekends. It isn't just a generic bar — it's a launchpad for fun times with friends, especially when a good DJ is spinning. For many, SkyBar has been a constant throughout their college years, a reliable weekend and birthday destination no matter how much everything else changes.

"Every experience I've had at SkyBar has been really fun, but that's all to do with the people I went with each time. SkyBar is pretty famous, so it's almost like a hot spot to see everyone. You bump into a lot of people,

whether that's people in your classes or even people from high school," said Rachel Fanning, senior in studio art.

BEST NEW RESTAURANT: TACORITA

Tacorita opened its doors in Downtown Auburn in Oct. 2024. Known for gourmet tacos and freshly-juiced margaritas, Tacorita has made its mark on the Auburn community.

"Hearing that we won best new restaurant, that's pretty cool. [It adds] a little bit more pride in what we do. I mean, it's great. The tacos are really good. I think, honestly, as far as pricing goes, we pretty much match all our competitors. It's really nice. But, the best part is the margaritas. They're standalone probably the best margaritas at Auburn," said Joe O'Brocki, server at Tacorita.

BEST SWEET TREAT: SWEETFROG

All of Auburn has been buzzing since this self-serve frozen yogurt shop had their grand opening this year on Jan. 1. Most nights, weekdays or weekends, the shop has a line wrapped outside its doors.

The variety of toppings and frozen yogurt flavors allow customers to make endless varieties of frozen yogurt combinations. This family-friendly sweet spot caters to everyone, whether one is looking for something inexpensive, extravagant or has certain dietary restrictions.



ESTELA MUNOZ | PHOTOGRAPHER
A small cup of sweet-Frog frozen yogurt with toppings.

BEST LOCAL RESTAURANT: THE GRILLE AT BOTANIC

Hearing that Chicken Salad Chick's founder owns a restaurant suggests a dining experience exceeding typical expectations. This Auburn favorite is known for their delicious, but messy, bread that kicks off the beginning to an extravagant dinner.

Botanic, a restaurant and gathering place located at 1702 Frederick Rd. in Opelika, has much more to offer than The Grille. A market, garden shop and local events can all be found at the property. Reservations for The Grille can be made online.



ELLA WALTON | LIFESTYLE EDITOR
Botanic's patio seating, surrounded by greenery.

BEST PIZZA: ARICCIA CUCINA ITALIANA

Ariccia Cucina Italiana brings the authentic taste of wood-fired pizzas to Auburn with two convenient locations. Enjoy the full restaurant and bar experience within The Auburn Hotel, or grab a pizza from their dedicated station at Hey Day Market.

Pizzeria by Ariccia, located in Hey Day Market, recently launched a brand new menu that features all-new pies, custom creations, salads, pizza pockets and desserts.

BEST BURGER: JACK BROWN'S BEER & BURGER JOINT

Located off North College Street, Jack Brown's is known for its twists on the classic burger. From classic toppings like caramelized onions and bacon to more

unusual toppings like mac n' cheese and peanut butter, Jack Brown's has something for everyone.

Their menu features eight unique burgers made with 100% American Wagyu beef, plus a daily special for each day of the week. Sides include fries, sweet potato fries and fried oreos. They also have a variety of beers on tap. Jack Brown's is open until midnight Sunday through Wednesday and until 2 a.m. the remainder of the week, making it an ideal spot for late night snacking.

BEST WINGS: WINGSTOP

Located at 231 N Dean Rd. Suite 5, Wingstop is a popular chain restaurant for wings and other spicy snacks. Their cooked-to-order wings, available in an array of 14 signature flavors, from the fiery Atomic to the sweet and tangy Hawaiian, offer a customizable experience for every palate.

Whether one prefers traditional bone-in, boneless or crispy tenders, Wingstop delivers a satisfying crunch and bold taste. Complemented by their hand-cut seasoned fries and famous house-made ranch, Wingstop provides a flavorful and fun experience that has won over many Auburn wing lovers.

BEST LATE NIGHT FOOD: COOKOUT

There is no explanation needed as to why this southern fast food chain takes the cake for this category. Milkshakes, burgers, quesadillas and white cheddar bites are the perfect way to celebrate a successful day or end a wild night.

This is the second year in a row this chain restaurant has won the best late night food. Cookout is located on the corners of Opelika Road and E. University Drive.



INGRID SCHNADER | PHOTOGRAPHER
Cookout sign in Auburn, AL.