

# BROOKLYN MAGAZINE

## Your Exclusive First Look at Carla Hall's Southern Kitchen

BY SARAH ZORN

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Is Carla Hall's Southern Kitchen the most feverishly anticipated Brooklyn opening of the year? It seems safe to say so, considering it made most everyone's fall (and then winter, and then spring) restaurant watch lists. Its slow and steady progress has been eagerly monitored by denizens of the Columbia Waterfront District (while the isolated neighborhood has unprecedented access to critically acclaimed Thai food and old school Italian, it's sorely lacking in American heritage cuisine), and the long-dangled promise of a dedicated hot chicken spot essentially fueled the rise of incendiary poultry throughout the city.



But when all is said and done, Carla Hall's Southern Kitchen is probably significantly better for the delay. Because considering their objective was to thoroughly emulate Nashville (Hall actually penned a love letter to her native city, which is scrawled on the wall next to the kitchen) an end-of-spring heat wave seems much more conducive to chomping on collards and sipping sweet tea (according to an edict on dispense-it-yourself canisters, three simple syrup packets should be added if you want it Nashville sweet, two for Virginia Beach, one for Baltimore, and zero for Brooklyn style).

bullfrog  
+baum



It's also allowed Hall and crew to truly personalize the space—practically unrecognizable from its Whiskey Soda Lounge Days. Brightly colored barn lights cast a homey glow against displays of pickled vegetables, a mosaic of vintage recipe cards encircle the bathroom, and family photos are arranged atop chicken-patterned wallpaper (an artistic rendering also tracks the evolution of Thelma; the eatery's signature, flame toupeed bird). A small retail section—dubbed “Freddie Mai Provisions” after Hall’s grandmother—reflects deeply rooted relationship with Nashville vendors (look for Soberdough bread mix, Ava & Zoe’s habanero ketchup, and bourbon nib brittle from Olive & Sinclair Chocolate Co.), as does the beverage program; they’re the only place to boast kegs from Yazoo Brewing Company, carry bottles of pop from Pure Sodaworks, and collaborated with Brooklyn Brewery on a proprietary unfiltered lager.



And of course, there's that chicken, ordered by the plate or piece and offered with six different tiers of heat (a bell will sound and the staff will shout out “Boomshakalaka!” if you go for the level six option). The nut-free kitchen—you won't miss the pecans in a confit black eyed pea-adorned salad—also turns out wholly vegetarian hot and cold sides, including mac n' cheese, collards n'pot likker, sweet and yukon gold potato salad, and biscuits with Nashville Jam Company preserves.

But the best part is, Carla Hall's Southern Kitchen will—finally!— soft open on Monday, so as the saying goes (and a sign on the awning implores), do drop in.



*115 Columbia Street, Columbia Waterfront District*

*All photos by Louise Palmberg*