

LEFT: Bulldogs grace the UGA campus and downtown.

RIGHT: Owner Eric Vaughn named Toula's, his home-decor store, after his mother. BELOW, LEFT: Dine and shop on Washington Street.



Athens Spirit

One of the best college towns in the South really cranks up in the fall. We'll show you what to see, where to eat, and then tell you where to stay. By **Tanner C. Latham**

Hands down, Athens sits atop the list of our favorite mid-size college cities. Why? Vibrancy and walkability. The University of Georgia has always kept Athens current with the younger set, but you'll be pleased to find this town features great shops selling more than futons and restaurants serving more than pizza slices. Most of the action orbits four major streets—Washington, Clayton, Lumpkin, and College—so you're only steps from the next great find.

Shopping "Southern French" best describes the style of home-decor items—from furniture to bedding to locally made pottery—at Toula's. You'll be impressed by how artistically owner Eric Vaughn displays his items.

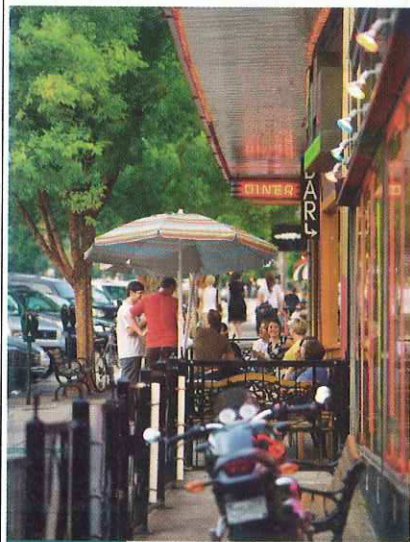
"Whoopie cushions have really come a long way," says April McDowell, manager of Junkman's Daughter's Brother. A pop-culture tchotkes catch-

all, this shop exists as the ultimate alternative department store. You may not actually buy anything in here, but please don't pass it by.

Vintage reigns at Agora, a funky lime green shop on the edge of Clayton. Sift through all the unique jewelry, throwback clothing, and classic antiques until you find something perfect for today.

Dining and Entertainment Even in the lingering heat of September, the tables beneath the trees outside Big City Bread Cafe stay cool. Try one of this adorable breakfast stop's specialties: an omelet or the quiche of the day.

No surprises with Weaver D's. This neon green-painted, cinder block soul food joint gained popularity long before hometown heroes R.E.M. illuminated its slogan "Automatic for the People" with their album. Dexter Weaver is still piling homemade macaroni and cheese, collards, and sweet potato soufflé on plates with fried



The Details

- **Agora:** 260 West Clayton; (706) 316-0130
- **Big City Bread Cafe:** 393 North Finley; (706) 353-0029
- **Ciné:** 234 West Hancock Avenue; (706) 353-7377
- **Farm 255:** 255 West Washington Street; (706) 549-4660
- **Five and Ten:** 1653 South Lumpkin; (706) 546-7300
- **Junkman's:** 458 East Clayton; (706) 543-4454
- **Toula's:** 225 West Clayton; (706) 353-7339
- **Weaver D's:** 1016 East Broad Street; (706) 353-7797

chicken as fast as he can. Automatic.

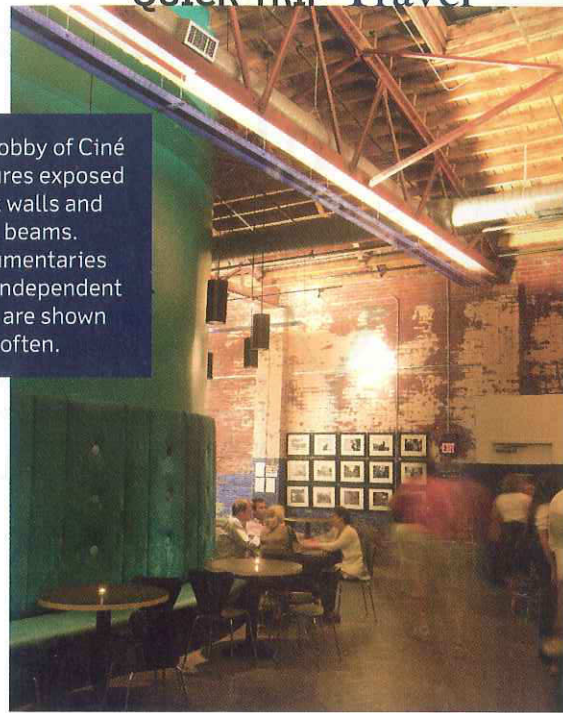
Peek at the Five and Ten menu—bronzed Gulf redfish with lemon emulsion or shiitake risotto with grilled scallions, for example—and you may think stuffy. The dining is fine, for sure, but the atmosphere stays casual in one of the city's most popular restaurants. **Editor's tip:** Make reservations, because it gets crowded quickly.

You've probably seen Farm 255 featured in this magazine, and there's a reason. We return every time we're in town for the low-key vibe and delicious organic fare. **Bonus:** The staff pulls double-duty on the farm where the veggies are grown.

When dinner is done, grab a drink or catch a late-night indie movie or documentary at Ciné, a bar and theater occupying a former post office extension built in the 1930s.

Lodging There are two football games in Athens this month (September 6 and 27) so forget staying overnight on those weekends. On other days, try the Hilton Garden Inn (rates start at \$139) located right downtown. www.hiltongardeninn.com or (706) 353-6800. As an alternative, stay at the Foundry Park Inn & Spa (\$115 week/\$145 weekend). www.foundryparkinn.com or (706) 549-7020. ●

The lobby of Ciné features exposed brick walls and steel beams. Documentaries and independent films are shown here often.



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For more info on the Athens music scene and our favorite venues: southernliving.com/athensmusic



Sporty Cashmere Hoodie, \$109

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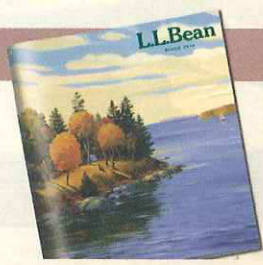


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