

VIRGINIA'S

ON KING



Virginia's on King Fact Sheet

Business Description:

Established in December of 2007, Virginia's on King is the third restaurant concept of the Holy City Hospitality group. A collection of family recipes and Southern cooking traditions, this Lowcountry dining spot specializes in upscale Southern cuisine prepared with the freshest, local ingredients. The classic Charleston influenced interior and the aromas of home cooking inspire all of the comforts of a traditional Southern kitchen. At the heart of Virginia's you will find gracious hospitality along with all of the flavors of the Lowcountry.

Location:

412 King Street, Historic Downtown Charleston, SC, 29403

Hours of Operation: Dinner begins at 11 am, served through to Supper service beginning at 3pm, Monday through Saturday. Sunday Brunch is served from 10am to 3pm.

Private Event Options: The upstairs dining room can accommodate large private and semi-private groups. For larger groups, limited menus are available to accommodate tastes and a variety of budgetary needs. A coordinator assists with all arrangements and menu selection.

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Media Contact: Blythe Saucier, Holy City Hospitality Director of Marketing. blythe@holycityhospitality.com 843.723.7952 p

Management:

Mark O'Driscoll mark@virginiasonking.com

Chef de Cuisine:

Johnny Greene chef@virginiasonking.com

Holy City Hospitality: In 2005 Holy City Hospitality, LLC was established as the parent company of 39 Rue de Jean, Coast, Good Food Catering & Virginia's on King.

Owners:

R. Daren Wolfe: Operating
Partner Mike Bennett: Partner
Hank Hofford: Partner



Southern Cooking, Lowcountry Style

A COLLECTION OF FAMILY RECIPES AND SOUTHERN COOKING TRADITIONS

Our inspiration for this restaurant came from Warren J. and Virginia Bennett. Warren J. was known to most as “Red” for he had the true look of an Irishman. He and Virginia were both 17 when they were married in 1939. As natives to Charleston, Red and Virginia were raised with the customs of the South. Mrs. Bennett will tell you, as any true Southerner will agree, that food and family are the threads that bind the traditions of the South.

Virginia brought up a family of her own, raising four boys and two girls. For years, the Bennett family went to church on Sunday and then came home to Sunday Family Dinner. Traditionally, Southern families joined together in the afternoon for good company, conversation, and the familiar dishes prepared from family recipes, collected and passed down through the years.

Virginia’s children grew older, and soon had children of their own. As their lives grew to be busier, it became difficult to carry on the long-time Sunday tradition. Nevertheless, Red wanted to keep the children close.

Thus began Thursday Family Dinner, where the Bennett family gathers each week at noon.

Coming together on Thursdays allowed most everyone to join.

The first Thursday Family Dinner was in 1983. Red passed away just a few years later. For years, Virginia has kept the tradition alive in memory of him. She still prepares the home cooked Southern fare that for years has graced the dinner table of the Bennett household. Virginia’s home is no longer a host to only her children and grandchildren but to family friends as well, and now, you.

At the heart of Virginia’s you will find familiar Southern dishes and gracious Charleston hospitality. Our preparations are a collection of family recipes, fresh ingredients, and Southern cooking traditions.

“Hope you enjoy.” – *Mrs. Virginia Bennett*



Southern Cooking, Lowcountry Style

Holy City Hospitality

Holy City Hospitality brings inventive combinations of the freshest seasonal ingredients together with accommodating, thoughtful service to inspire memorable experiences. Our philosophy is simply consistent hospitality, from the kitchen to the table.

In addition to Virginia's on King, Holy City Hospitality proudly represents...

39 Rue de Jean 39 John Street,
Charleston, SC 29403 843.722.8881
www.39ruedejean.com

Inspired by the style of classic French Brasseries, the impeccable flavor and European design lend an air of sophisticated comfort. Rue's menu incorporates classic French staples with contemporary fare. A dining destination for both leisurely lunches and lively dinners, 39 Rue de Jean has become a favorite meeting spot for both locals and visitors. Experience a taste of Paris in Downtown Charleston. Serving Lunch, Dinner and Sunday Brunch.

Coast 39-D John Street, Charleston, SC,
29403 843.722.8838
www.coastbarandgrill.com

Coast serves up Charleston's freshest seafood with laidback Lowcountry style. Our chefs meet daily with local farmers and fishermen to procure the freshest ingredients available. The menu incorporates Charleston Classics with our chefs' unique creations. Dinner is served nightly beginning at 5:30

Good Food Catering 17 Lockwood Drive, Charleston, SC, 29401 843.723.7952 www.goodfoodcatering.net Catering to private homes, offices and venues throughout the Lowcountry, GFC brings the food you love to the places that inspire you. Cuisine options range from French and Asian flavors to classic Charleston recipes. Our culinary team is committed to incorporating the freshest seasonal ingredients into their creations. As a full-service catering and venue management company, we personalize your event from menu design and planning to seamless execution.



Southern Cooking, Lowcountry Style

R. Daren Wolfe, Operating Partner, Holy City Hospitality

Daren Wolfe has been working in the food and beverage industry for 27 years. A University of Tennessee graduate, having been admitted on a full music scholarship he acquired degrees in Theology, Psychology, as well as a Business Minor.

Wolfe has worked in a management capacity in Knoxville, TN, Hilton Head, SC, Lake Tahoe, CA, Atlanta, GA and Charleston, SC. While in Hilton Head, he managed at the Westin at Port Royal Sound, at the time one of only two five star five diamond resorts on the East Coast.

Upon moving to Charleston Wolfe was employed with The Woodlands, a five diamond resort whose dining room was also rated a perfect score of 100 by Conde Naste. Wolfe achieved much success as the General Manager of McCrady's, voted Restaurant of the Year by the Post and Courier. Shortly after starting his own consulting business in 2001, he joined Coast Bar and Grill as G.M., and later became General Manager of 39 Rue de Jean.

In the summer of 2004, he accepted the position of Director of Operations for Holy City Hospitality, and commenced to launch Good Food Catering. In the fall of 2005, Wolfe became the Operating Partner of Holy City Hospitality.

"The food and beverage industry is in my blood and I really enjoy working with people. I couldn't imagine not being in the fast paced, highly demanding hospitality field. I hire managers that consequently hire employees that are passionate about the industry and are proud of their accomplishments. I believe that we are in the best business in the world as everyday brings something new," he says of his experience and love for his work.

R. Daren Wolfe is married to Kirsten Wolfe with one daughter, Sophia Elise. He enjoys spending as much time with his family in the great outdoors as possible.

A Coastal Classic

Virginia's on King does right by its homegrown cuisine

BY JEFF ALLEN

Virginia's on King

Southern
Entrée Prices: Moderate
Lunch, Dinner, Sun. Brunch
412 King St.
Downtown
735-5800

The menu at Virginia's on King is packed with classic coastal Southern cuisine, but the most authentic dish lurking among the country-fried steak and collard greens is the humble bowl of okra soup. It's also the most overlooked of all traditional Charleston preparations. It comes out of a few kitchens across town in various guises, but real okra soup, the kind served at Virginia's, is closer to the heart of Charleston's true cuisine than even shrimp and grits. It doesn't lean too heavily on tomatoes, or beef, or okra. It combines all three in a perfect mélange.

It's an ideal balance — the leftover bones of a beef carcass, boiled for hours until relieved of their rich flavor and body, the acid bite of tomato chunks, and the mucilaginous ooze of the African okra pod — that dates back to the rice fields of another time. It is our answer to the New Orleans gumbo (even if Charleston claims a "gumbo" of its own as well). From the pots of Lowcountry slaves, through the hands of Mrs. Virginia Bennett, to the restaurant that now bears her name, such strong roots can be sensed. Her okra soup is deep and redolent, bursting at the seams with the lip-smacking stickiness of rendered knuckle bones and the mysterious, musky vegetal character of stewed okra.

The mere existence of okra soup (\$5.95) at this brand new restaurant from the Holy City Hospitality Group proves how serious they take this food. In fact, there are more nods to Southern cuisine on the menu than at a backcountry camp meeting. And the prices, like the portions, are generous — dishes like country-fried steak (\$13.95), chicken and dumplings (\$12.95), and fried catfish (\$13.95). Crispy fried okra comes out crunchy and hot in large portions for \$5.95. The pimento cheese (\$6.95) bites the tongue with the sharp snap of real, grated cheddar, thick and lumpy like Grandma's. Even the deviled crab (\$8.95) won't break the bank, and it's full of sweet body meat, spicy and rich, with a crunchy crust on top to balance all that creaminess beneath. Try finding an edible crab dish on the peninsula for fewer than ten bucks, let alone one as satisfying as that found at Virginia's.



LESLIE MCHELLAR

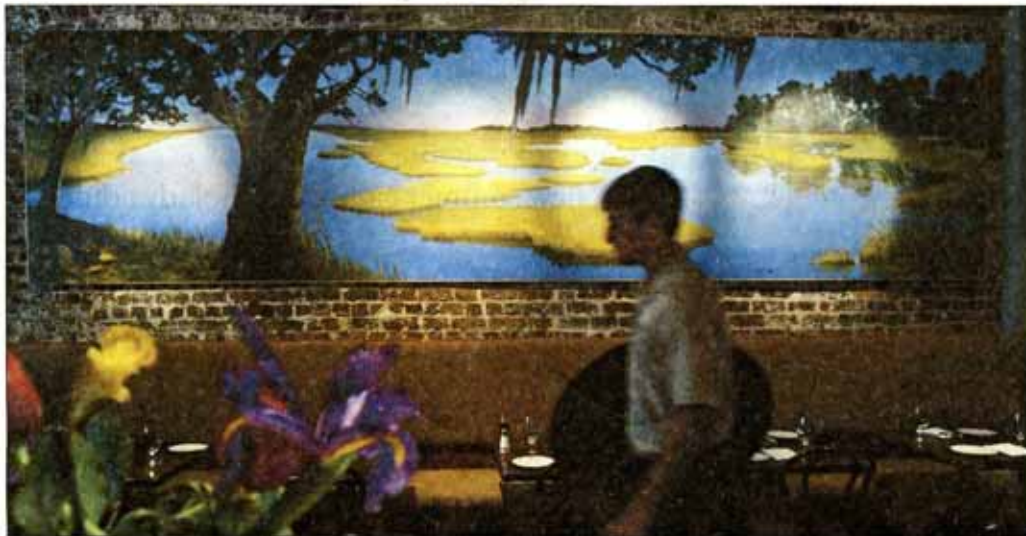
TRADITIONAL DISHES LIKE THE LOWCOUNTRY BOIL MAKE MAMA PROUD AT VIRGINIA'S

Other offerings are equally stellar. The creamy she-crab soup (\$7.95) claims to replicate the original recipe created by William Deas, the black cook at the legendary Everett's. Collard greens, smoky and thick with bacon, go around the table once before being devoured, and the rice is authentic Carolina Gold. By merely appropriating the family recipes safeguarded for a generation by the grandmotherly figure for which the place is named, the proprietors of Virginia's have set the standard for authentic Lowcountry cuisine on the lower peninsula. I have nothing negative to say about the food — only the highest praise for a kitchen willing to serve the real thing, without cutting corners, and at a fair price. You'd better get there before the lunch line has Yankees queued clear around the corner and down the middle of Marion Square.

If I have to quibble a bit with Virginia's approach, it's not in what's there, but what's missing. In all the celebration of mythic Southern food, the glazed hams, po' boys, and pulled pork sandwiches, in the awesome grilled cheese designed for dipping into tomato soup and the Lowcountry oyster stew, it's hard to

ignore the unspoken legacies from which such food is derived. There's a large picture on the wall of a joyful dinner party, well-dressed men, women, and children comfortably seated in the affluent surroundings of a grand Southern home with smiles all around at the thought of digging into another feast courtesy of Mrs. Virginia Bennett. But I miss the other cooks, the help in the kitchen and beyond. I miss the sharecropper who scrapped by on salt pork, cornmeal, and molasses. I miss the slave who brought the okra and rice from West African shores. I miss the hardscrabble Southerners who lived on such cuisine before motherly matrons appropriated it as their own.

If it were my place, I'd hang a portrait of William Deas himself. I'd invoke the smallholders and the mosquito fleet, ragtag freedmen in precarious vessels sailing the coast to bring back the bounty of the sea. I'd give credit where credit is due. Then I'd sit down to a "farmer's plate," a big pile of sides — butter beans, rice, mac and cheese, and maybe even some grits, and I'd toast Mrs. Virginia Bennett, who must have been one hell of a cook. ■



Virginia's on King, at 412 King St. in Charleston, serves Lowcountry family recipes such as Frogmore Stew and okra soup.

MALINDA M. JAMES - james@charlotteobserver.com

4 savory spots in the Lowcountry

These places will have you loosening your belt for she-crab soup, shrimp and grits or chicken

BY JONATHAN LEVITT
 Boston Globe

Pastel-colored Charleston sits low and pretty at the junction of the Ashley and Cooper rivers. Lighted with gas lanterns, bursting with blooming oleander and camellias, lined with stately old Federal and Greek Revival mansions, and thick with magnolias, palmetto palms, and live oaks dripping Spanish moss, Charleston looks too good to be true — more like an Epcot pavilion than a real city.

But it's not all good manners and living history. Beneath the scrubbed and potted and tourist-ready, an authentic food culture thrives, anchored by dozens of great restaurants. From the linen-clad to the plastic-forked and everything in between, they crank out dish after dish of shrimp and grits, she-crab soup, boiled peanuts. The food is simple but refined, influenced by far-flung places but distinctive to Charleston and the surrounding Lowcountry — one of this country's few true regional cuisines.

Love Lowcountry? Try these four restaurants on for size.

**RESTAURANT DETAILS
 INSIDE, page 5.**



MALINDA M. JAMES - james@charlotteobserver.com

Gullah Cuisine: Gullah rice with smoked sausage, shrimp, chicken, green peppers and carrots (front) and a plate of fried chicken, rice and collard greens (back).



MALINDA M. JAMES - james@charlotteobserver.com

Virginia's on King: Fried chicken, collard greens, and mac and cheese.



MALINDA M. JAMES - james@charlotteobserver.com

Hominy Grill: The Shrimp and Grits main ingredients are bacon, shrimp, grits, mushrooms and green onions.



LARRY LEE PHOTO

SeeWee Restaurant: Fried soft shell crab with coleslaw, collard greens, fried squash and fried green tomatoes.

Virginia's on King

Around the corner from Hominy Grill, Virginia's on King, posh and spotless with brick walls and leather booths, is named for Virginia Bennett, the mother of one of the owners, and serves up the cooking of their family table. Okra soup — beef stock, tomatoes, bacon and okra — tastes like something from another time. Frogmore Stew, also known as Beaufort Stew, tidewater boil, or Lowcountry boil, is usually a simmering cauldron of shrimp, corn on the cob, sausage, and red potatoes dumped on newspapers and devoured. Here it makes its way into a handsome bowl but tastes as good as ever. She-crab soup is rich and creamy, a sort of crab bisque but finished with deep pink crab roe and a splash of dry sherry. The tea is sweet and good, and the pineapple upside-down cake is my new favorite dessert.

Virginia's on King, 412 King St., Charleston. Lowcountry family recipes dressed for dinner. Entrees \$15.99-\$21.99. Hours: 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Monday-Saturday, 10-3 Sunday. Details: 843-735-5800; www.virginiasonking.com.