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

# 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  
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**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).



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



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**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.