



Networking Dinners



HOST: Katie Walker

meet in the hotel lobby at 5:30p



HOST: Susan Thibodeaux

meet in the hotel lobby at 5:30p



HOST: Janelly Ricardo

meet in the hotel lobby at 5:30p

Saturday, March 28 Ri Ra Irish Pub

208 N. Tryon St, Charlotte - 704-412-2616 // Contact: Emily Casada

Rí Rá opened its doors for the first time on March 14th, 1997. The pub survived a major fire in 2009 and is celebrating its 21st anniversary in 2018. Meticulously restored in Ireland and shipped to the US, Rí Rá embodies everything that you would expect from a genuine Irish pub. The pub has been carefully restored from old Irish pubs and related salvaged artifacts including an original shop bar and a 19th century Victorian bar. The pub and fire restoration required a tremendous effort from a select group of master carpenters, glazers and painters. We are proud to showcase a unique and genuine Irish pub in Uptown Charlotte.

<https://rira.com/charlotte/>

Sunday, March 29 The Mellow Mushroom

255 W. Martin Luther Blvd., Charlotte - 704-371-4725 // Contact: Cynthia

Mellow Mushroom opened in Atlanta, Georgia in 1974 when two college students from Georgia Tech, later joined by a third from the University of Georgia, founded a business that reflected their eccentric philosophies. The first restaurant was opened on Spring Street in Atlanta. In the late 1980s, the first franchise was opened by an employee, followed by customer-owned franchises, and then to friends of employees and customers. Each franchise is locally owned and operated with its own unique feel.

The first franchise to be located outside of Atlanta was in Athens, Georgia, near the University of Georgia. There are several dozen locations operating in Atlanta and elsewhere in Georgia. Beginning in 2000, the franchise expanded outside college markets to urban areas such as Jacksonville, Florida and Denver, Colorado. To date, the chain has over 200 locations across 20 states. <https://order.mellowmushroom.com/menu/charlotte-uptown-mellow-mushroom>

Monday, March 30 Sea Level

129 E. 5th Street, Charlotte - 704-412-2626 // Contact: Brittany

Evolving the concept of Sea Level NC has been a project of passion for Paul Manley for over six years. While designing and opening other successful seafood restaurants and oyster bars in The Carolinas, Paul uncovered a fundamental flaw in their business models. The safe and consistent procurement of oysters, their core offering, was volatile and subject to outside factors beyond their control. Reliance on a wild product for a signature menu item so significant that it's in a business' name is a threat. Their reputation and future is tied to a product that is susceptible to spoilage, disease, and sustainability issues.

Paul set out to create a seafood restaurant that grew its own signature items and relied more on sustainable, local supply lines. He then spent two years networking on the North Carolina coast with aquaculture specialists, farmers, scientists, shrimpers, and other "watermen". From these efforts he partnered with local NC oyster and clam farmers in the town of Sea Level, North Carolina to grow his own line of product, designed and harvested specifically to his restaurant standards.

He now has the only farm-to-fork oyster grown in North Carolina to be served on the half shell at Sea Level NC. There are only a handful of other known restaurants with this proprietary relationship to an oyster farm in the United States: Hog Island Oyster Bar in CA, Matunick Oyster Bar in RI, and Island Creek Oyster Bar in MA. They have garnered national praise for their sustainable model, co-branding efforts, and explosive popularity.

Sea Level NC takes this concept one step further. The core of its seafood offerings are harvested from local NC farms, in partnerships with coastal fishermen, and is dedicated to serving only non-threatened species. <https://www.sealevelnc.com/>