



10Best.com

January 20, 2022

# 'Chopped' chef Dan Doyle's favorite restaurants on the other side of Charleston

From Sullivan's Island to Mt. Pleasant, there's more to Charleston than downtown



Chef Dan Doyle of The Fish House — Photo courtesy of Eric Vitale photography

Passionate food lovers know that Charleston, South Carolina has been home to a flourishing culinary scene for decades, with a concentration of noteworthy restaurants primarily located in the downtown section of the city. Over the years, the region's roster of innovative eateries has also grown throughout the nearby Lowcountry, which includes the surrounding areas of Mt. Pleasant, John's Island, West Ashley and James Island.

Spending a large portion of his career in the Charleston area, chef Daniel Doyle is known for being instrumental in creating modern versions of Lowcountry dishes at several groundbreaking restaurants (including Poogan's Porch) in the city. Currently, he's the Executive Chef at the award-winning [Fish House](#) at the Beach Club at Charleston Harbor Resort and Marina, located in Mt. Pleasant, just minutes from the city.

The Fish House is an upscale-yet-casual waterfront destination with a menu that showcases Doyle's distinctive take on regional seafood specialties. Growing up in North Carolina, he honed his craft at a number of restaurants in and around Charleston. Recently, he has appeared on a number of national and international cooking and travel TV shows, including the Food Network's "Chopped" series.

Doyle points out that the area's continually-changing culinary community has seen a nuanced pivot – from Southern-style dishes to a more globally-influenced cuisine. He says, "I think Charleston has always been known for its incredible, high-quality food. However, since I first arrived in 1997, I've noticed that there has been explosive growth in the diversity of the types of food available. Before, it was almost only Southern food, but now, there's food in Charleston from all over the world, and it's all really well done. From French Brasserie-style to Middle-Eastern to Korean barbecue – it's all here."

Doyle adds, "The food scene here is very competitive, and there's so much amazing, high-quality food available to settle for anything less. Also, I would recommend that people eat food made with locally-sourced ingredients as much as possible, especially seafood, which is excellent here."

Doyle believes that Charleston has more to offer than its classic downtown spots, and visitors who branch out and take a short drive (or a quick water taxi ride) to the surrounding area are sure to be rewarded by getting an unexpected taste of the culinary scene surrounding the city.

For food lovers who wish to explore the area beyond the city, chef Doyle shares another side to Charleston and reveals his own favorite restaurants outside of downtown:

# The Fish House at The Beach Club at Charleston Harbor Resort and Marina



Fish House dining room — Photo courtesy of Fish House

Stepping into his role as the Executive Chef at the [Fish House](#) in February 2020 proved to be challenging timing to say the least (due to COVID), but Doyle forged on and focused on the positives, while making some adjustments at this upscale casual harborside destination that's bright, sunny and light-filled, with large windows and an expansive bar area.

Featuring postcard-perfect views of the marina, the restaurant is situated at the [Beach Club at the Charleston Harbor Resort and Marina](#), which is a sprawling destination that attracts visitors and locals alike. With nearly 100 rooms and suites, the resort has multiple swimming pools, a spa, a private beach, outdoor patios, several bars and fire pits. Best of all, it's quick water taxi ride to downtown Charleston (about 15 minutes) and other area locations.



Shrimp salad at the Fish House — Photo courtesy of Marla Cimini

Doyle said, “During the pandemic, I focused on refining our menu to be lighter, more fun and more seasonal. We use local suppliers as much as possible, and create many of our dishes based on what can be found in the area, particularly local fish like snapper, grouper and wahoo, in addition to local produce like okra, Bradford watermelons and pumpkins. The menu is my way of honoring Southern Coastal cuisine.”

Customers adore the food and keep coming back for the scenic vistas from the Fish House, especially the spacious rooftop bar. “There’s not a better view of the Charleston Harbor than the ones from The Fish House,” he said. “And there is not a bad seat in the house. From your chair, you can look out over the whole marina, including the USS Yorktown and USS Laffey, all with the Ravenel Bridge and downtown Charleston skyline as the backdrop.”

He revealed, “My father was actually a cook stationed on the USS Laffey during Vietnam, so it’s really a cool thing to look out from the Fish House and have that full circle moment. If he had never done that, I wouldn’t be where I am today.”

# Red Drum



Surf and turf — Photo courtesy of Red Drum

A Mt. Pleasant classic, [Red Drum](#) holds a special place in Doyle's heart – after all, he proposed to his fiancée, Kelly Hill, at this restaurant last May.

A high-end, yet friendly destination, Red Drum offers “something for everyone” on their south-by-southwest-inspired menu, including fried shrimp, pan-seared sea scallops, pork chops, steaks and more.

Doyle says, “I can bring friends here for a sophisticated meal, but I also know our kids love it. Red Drum is fantastic because the menu has great variety but isn't overly-done. The chef lets the ingredients be the ingredients, and the overall vibe remains unpretentious, which is how I like to cook, too. My favorite dish on the menu is the wood-fired chicken breast. It's grilled chicken with crispy tortillas, asparagus, avocado, garlic cream sauce and mashed potatoes – it's really good.”

If you're looking to chat and make friends, Red Drum is known to be a warm and welcoming spot. Doyle suggests heading to the bar because “the bartenders are all excellent and fun, and you'll be shoulder-to-shoulder with a lot of Mt. Pleasant locals.”

# Nico



Oysters at Nico — Photo courtesy of Andrew Cebulka

[Nico](#) is a modern oyster bar and French-brasserie-style restaurant in Shem Creek. With a sleek, airy dining area, Nico offers much more than shellfish. Here, they serve up casual favorites (such as wide variety of sandwiches and salads) with a European flair.

Doyle is long-time friends with the owner, Nico Romo, who is from France. “He is one of the most talented, humble people you could ever meet. I’ve known him for 10-plus years – he took over at Fish in downtown Charleston for a while after I left, and I love coming to this place.”

Doyle makes a suggestion for future guests, “A lot of people come for dinner, but my pro tip is to come for brunch and have some oysters or a classic French dish like a croque madame, croque monsieur, pomme frites or a ham and gruyere omelet. They also make one of the best lobster rolls I’ve ever eaten. You can’t go wrong with any of the food.”

Fun fact: You’d never know it, but Nico used to be a Pizza Hut. Doyle says that if you look closely, maybe you can tell. “They’ve done an incredible job with the interiors and the overall vibe of the place.”

# Poe's Tavern



Poe's Tavern Amontillado burger — Photo courtesy of Poe's Tavern

[Poe's Tavern](#) is a homage to the famous author, Edgar Allan Poe, who was stationed nearby in the 1800s while in the army. This eatery is a small, yet iconic spot on Sullivan's Island that's known far and wide for its superb burgers, all creatively named after Edgar Allan Poe's famous works (such as the Black Cat, Pit & Pendulum and the Tell-Tale Heart).

Located just two blocks from the ocean, Poe's is a charming seaside landmark with a menu that also features an array of fresh, simple items, such as salads, soups and fish tacos. It's often busy with a hungry beach-going crowd.

Doyle has been a repeat guest for years and says, "This is the place to stop on the way to or from the beach, or to visit when you want something that isn't seafood. Despite having a tiny kitchen, they are cranking out hundreds of burgers a day. My favorite is The Sleeper, with blue cheese and buffalo shrimp."

Doyle reveals that Poe's is a family favorite. His kids love it there – and every time his parents visit, they always enjoy a burger on the front porch at Poe's.

# The Obstinate Daughter



The Obstinate Daughter's pizza — Photo courtesy of The Obstinate Daughter

With rustic-chic interiors and a busy open kitchen, [The Obstinate Daughter](#) on Sullivan's Island is filled with vibrant energy. This bustling, popular restaurant attracts locals and visitors alike, and the seasonal menu features a selection of daily specials and plenty of inventive offerings suitable for sharing, too.

Doyle mentioned that the owner, Jacques Larson, is “super talented and has worked all over Charleston with some great chefs” and points out that The Obstinate Daughter is an ideal lunch stop.

He says, “A lot of people go here for special occasions, but I like to bring my fiancée and the family on the way to the beach. Lunchtime is when I like to go for their salads, such as the roasted beet salad, or the shrimp roll. The meatball sandwich is also one of my favorites. They aren't generally well-known for their more decadent dishes, but that's where I tend to gravitate. The lamb sausage pappardelle is delicious and The Rutledge is my favorite pizza.”

Doyle advises not to skip dessert. “They also have a gelato shop downstairs perfect for a hot sunny day.”

# Jackrabbit Filly



Interior of Jackrabbit Filly — Photo courtesy of Jackrabbit Filly

Park Circle in North Charleston has undergone a lot of revitalization over the last decade, and Doyle encourages foodies to make it a point to dine at [Jackrabbit Filly](#), which opened in 2019 by Shuai and Corrie Wang, who previously rolled around town in a popular food truck (called “Short Grain”).

Fun and colorful with an eclectic style, this restaurant's variety of menu items is as creative as its whimsical decor. Doyle says, “Jackrabbit Filly is my favorite, which is serving some of the most inventive food in Charleston right now. This place has amazing food and excellent service, but remains unpretentious. I personally recommend the pork and cabbage dumplings, and the Japanese fried chicken.”

He added, “The crowd is mostly local and I would recommend making a reservation. It’s really nice to sit outside on milder nights to catch the vibe of this side of Charleston. If it’s really crowded, I like to sit at the bar.”

Pro tip: Chef Doyle recommends driving or taking a ride-share service here, as it’s about 20 minutes from The Beach Club or downtown Charleston.