

THE ATLANTA LAWYER

www.atlantabar.org | OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE ATLANTA BAR ASSOCIATION | MARCH/APRIL 2011



**A Courthouse Line IX:
Law School Musical
May 19-21, 2011**

THE ATLANTA LAWYER

Volume 9, No.2

March/April 2011

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Courthouse Bites

By Courthouse Bites

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It is 12 noon at **Powell's Country Kitchen** (116 W King St Dalton, GA 30720 • 706-278-1545) in downtown Dalton. The dining room is brimming with life as it has every lunch hour for the past 30 years. Generous portions of meats and sides are dished out to their loyal blue and white collar following of lawyers and law enforcement officers, judges and jurors, construction workers and retirees, all sharing conversation (and even tables) as they await the day's offerings. Here I sit, an Atlanta lawyer amongst a sea of locals, wondering just how lucky I was that I asked that bailiff for a restaurant recommendation on the way out of court. A sociable meat-and-three like Powell's is the epitome of Southern courthouse dining and, with a simple tip from a bailiff, I was able to have a memorable meal in Whitfield County. Sometimes though, we are not so lucky.

On a recent visit to Butts County, I hit up an Assistant District Attorney for a lunch recommendation. He asked what I was interested in and I gave him my usual response, "Tell me about a place I shouldn't miss." The ADA responded, "I highly recommend *Ingles*." (Yes, the grocery store chain.)

It is experiences like these that led to **CourthouseBites**--a blog devoted to Georgia courthouse restaurants where lawyers can learn about the Powell's of our great State from the courthouse diners who know them best. Locals can tout their hidden gems, or we can report on a great find from one of our journeys, while everyone can browse restaurant reviews by jurisdiction so that we no longer have to hedge our bets on last second recommendations. Just to show how lucky I was to find Powell's, I have spoken to several Atlanta lawyers who have frequented the Whitfield County courthouse and not one of them had eaten there. Likely because of the restaurant's non-descript storefront, most of us would walk right past the place if we did not know what was on the other side.

This is Georgia, so it is no surprise that Southern cuisine and barbecue account for the majority of our celebrated courthouse haunts. **Watershed** (406 West Ponce De Leon Ave Decatur, GA 30030 • 404-378-4900) in DeKalb County and **The Swanson** (933 Carroll St Perry, GA 31069 • 478-987-1938) in Houston County are far from historic but both have received national recognition for their traditional Southern fare. Lucky for us lawyers, both are within striking distance of the courthouse. A recent article in *Garden & Gun* listed The Swanson as one of the best fried chicken plates in the South. Watershed has won almost every "Best

of..." award known to man and has been called "the restaurant that defines the South." Athens/Clarke County is home to not one, but two legendary soul food joints both within reach of the courthouse. **Weaver D's** (1016 E. Broad St Athens, GA 30601 • 706-353-7797), of REM *Automatic for the People* fame, is in its 25th year of dishing out its inspirational meat-and-three's to the college kids and courthouse crowd. Going on almost thirty years, **Wilson's Soul Food** (351 N. Hull St Athens, GA 30603 • 706-353-7289) was recently featured in *O Magazine* and sets itself apart with its dedication to vegetarian sides. So while the famous fried pork chops are the mainstay here, do not expect any ham hock in the collards and green beans. In Fayette County, there is a barbecue rivalry between **Speedi-Pig** (715 Glynn St South Fayetteville, GA 30214 • 770-719-2720) and **Melear's** (420 Glynn St South Fayetteville, GA 30214 • 770-461-7180)—sitting just a few hundred yards from each other. If you ask around, the locals typically love one and hate the other. Breakfast at Melear's, though, is the place to be if you want to rub elbows with the judges and local lawmakers. With courthouse dining, that is sometimes just as important as the food. Running into the judge at lunch lets him or her know that you are one of them and not one of those "snobby" Atlanta lawyers.

For a piece of American culinary history, a visit to Macon's **Nu-Way Wieners** (430 Cotton Ave Macon, GA 31201 • 478-743-1368) is a must. Founded by James Mallis in 1916, Nu-Way is one of the oldest and most famous hot dog restaurants in the country. Featured in *The New York Times*, on PBS, *The Today Show*, the Travel Channel and even *Oprah*, those little dogs covered in chili and slaw have received critical acclaim as well as historical significance from food history buffs and hot dog connoisseurs alike. While there are now several locations, courthouse goers are just a couple short blocks from the Cotton Avenue original underneath the famous neon sign.

Many courthouse squares are now host to a variety of international eateries. An unlikely find in the dreadful surroundings of the Fulton County courthouse is **Pixels Cafe** (30 Decatur St SE Atlanta, GA 30303 • 404-659-1139). You certainly cannot find a three or four star restaurant anywhere near the busiest courthouse in Georgia (why is that?). But, in the heart of GSU proper, behind a façade touting the standard wings and phillys that seem to dominate the downtown lunch scene, lies surprisingly authentic Korean cuisine. Try the *bibimbap*, a rice dish with vegetables and meat in a spicy sauce, or the *bulgogi*, a Korean barbecue sandwich,

the next time you are looking for somewhere to walk to in Fulton County. Who would have guessed that the very first Australian bakery in the country was opened right down the street from the Cobb County courthouse? According to *Wikipedia*, the United States was first introduced to the Australian meat pie in 1994 when Mark and Wendy Allen opened their bakery in the Marietta square. The aptly named **Australian Bakery Cafe** (48 S Park Sq SE Marietta, GA 30060 • 678-797-6222) ships their famous meat pies to Aussie and New Zealand ex-pats all over the country, but we can walk three blocks from the courthouse to get them straight out of the oven. The unlikely standout in Clayton County is by far **Taqueria la Oaxaquena** (605 Mt. Zion Rd Jonesboro, GA 30236 • 770-960-3010) and their ultra-popular *tlayudas* (an enormous handmade crispy tortilla topped with beans, Oaxaca cheese, chorizo, avocado, radish, lettuce and roasted jalapenos). Yes, it is over five miles from the courthouse but that is not far to drive for what the *AJC*'s John Kessler hails as "*the best Mexican food in Atlanta.*"

In these days of laptops and iPads, the coffeehouse has become the new law library now that legal research and your VPN are

only a Wi-Fi away. Two of the best are **Java Monkey** (425 Church St Decatur, GA 30030 • 404-378-5002) and **Inman Perk Coffee** (102 Washington St NW Gainesville, GA 30501 • 678-971- 8091) where you can also grab a decent bite to eat while returning emails and looking up last-minute case law. Setting Java Monkey apart are some serious skills in the kitchen that churns out large made-from-scratch biscuits in the morning and lunchtime pressed sandwiches like the Bello Prosciutto with smoked cheddar, granny smith apples, basil aioli and honey.

Whether it is a coffeehouse, an old school meat-and-three or a four-star establishment, almost all of our courthouses are home to restaurants with unique qualities that make them special. With a little help from **CourthouseBites**, Atlanta lawyers can once again look forward to going to court knowing that a great meal is never far away! ■



**ATLANTA BAR
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THE LEGAL RUNAROUND

5K RACE, WALK, AND TOT TROT

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7:30 A.M. - 11:00 A.M.**

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