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SPOTLIGHT

Not Your Mama's Biscuits

Holler & Dash in Homewood, which recently celebrated its one-year anniversary, puts a spin on the standard Southern biscuit.

BY ERIC VELASCO
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY HOLLER & DASH BISCUIT HOUSE

THE KICKBACK CHICKEN BISCUIT at Holler & Dash summarizes the care and thought woven into the menu items at the year-old biscuit-house chain.

Built around savory fried chicken on a fluffy biscuit, it's as Southern as a "holler." Kickback Chicken is a dashing combination of textures and flavors, at once both traditional and modern.

The playful welcome wall in the restaurant's first location in Homewood.



Top to bottom: An array of menu items at Holler & Dash, including the Kickback Chicken biscuit and housemade beignets with coffee dipping sauce. Chef Brandon Frohne is the director of cuisine at Holler & Dash.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JASON MCCONNELL

Its ingredients are regionally sourced and include goat cheese from Stone Hollow Farmstead in Harpersville, Alabama, antibiotic-free Springer Mountain Chicken from Georgia, and sweet pepper jelly from Nashville Jams. Chopped green onion adds acidity to cut through the richness.

"We take traditional Southern recipes and do our own take," says Brandon Frohne, director of cuisine for Holler & Dash. "We believe in the goodness of real food. We believe in the flavors of the modern South."

Holler & Dash's twist on Southern tradition includes creatively composed biscuit sandwiches and classic favorites like beignets and grits.

Each store has a unique personality that reflects its home community. Homewood was first, opening in March 2016. The other locations are Tuscaloosa; Celebration, Florida, outside Orlando; and most recently, the Nashville suburb of Brentwood, Tennessee.

Alabama producers supplying Holler & Dash include McEwen & Sons (grits, oatmeal, and corn meal), H.C. Valentine (coffee), and City Bee Company (honey).

The original lineup of signature biscuits was developed by Jason McConnell, the chef de cuisine for Holler & Dash. Frohne now is tweaking the menu by road-testing locally-inspired biscuit sandwiches.

"Our biscuits are made from scratch every day," Frohne says. "We take it very seriously. We even pull out a ruler to make sure they're the right height."

The fast-casual chain, geared for young adults, is a spin-off concept from Tennessee-based Cracker Barrel Old Country Store. Eater, the online food publication, describes Holler & Dash as a "Cracker Barrel for millennials."

But like a 20-something finally living away from home, Holler & Dash is adamant about establishing its own personality, independent of its parent.

Rocking chairs, checkerboards, and country kitsch are absent in this house. Holler & Dash set its vibe with upbeat music, an open kitchen, and art that doubles as visual puns about how the restaurant uses goat cheese and cage-free eggs. Look for drinks with YP appeal, like house-made sodas and both nitro- and cold-brew coffee.

The offspring doesn't even use the parent's branded bacon. Holler & Dash gets its cured pork from Kentucky-based Harper's Hams, a family-run smokehouse in business since 1952.

Harper's double-smoked bacon graces

Left to right: The Pork Rambler features fried pork tenderloin, blackberry butter, and fried onion straws. The Strawberry & Dash biscuit incorporates Creole whipped cream cheese.



both the Tot Bowl (\$5) and the Grit Bowl (\$7) made with McEwen's stone-ground organic grits. Side dishes include tots, salad, and vegetables pickled at Doux South, the brainchild of Atlanta chef Nick Melvin, who is a New Orleans native.

"We have so many amazing artisans in the South," Frohne says. "A lot are family-owned businesses. Establishing relationships with them is super-important to us. People want to know where their food comes from."

Holler & Dash, which is open from 7 a.m. until 2 p.m. with a single menu, takes a brunch approach. Some of its 11 signature biscuits (\$5-\$9) evoke breakfast, some lunch. Some are sweet, some savory. All are filling.

Chicken biscuits are the best-sellers, Frohne says. Chicken Holler is a tribute to Nashville hot chicken, with spice levels ranging from medium to hot to "make 'em holler." The Chicken Set Go biscuit combines Southern-fried bird, pimento cheese, sorghum, and jalapeño. Add a cage-free egg to your cluck for a buck.

The Flying Frittata biscuit is made from egg whites with roasted vegetables, cooked kale, herbed Greek yogurt, and hot sauce. Another vegetarian biscuit, Garden Goat, features kale, fried goat cheese, tomato jam, and lemon-Dijon vinaigrette.

Sweet options include the Strawberry & Dash, enhanced with Creole whipped cream cheese and powdered sugar. The Jam spreads Nutella and raspberry jam on a biscuit.

Pork options are plentiful, including a plate with andouille sausage and cheddar cheese on biscuit halves, all swimming in house sausage gravy. Or try the Hamabama: Harper's country ham, coffee-spiked red-eye aioli, kale, and apple butter.

The Hollerback Club stacks bacon, fried green tomatoes, and guacamole, then spikes the biscuit with Hollerback Sauce (a take on Mississippi Comeback sauce with mayonnaise, Louisiana hot sauce, and chili powder).

Hollerback Sauce also accompanies side orders of tots (\$3), as well as the cheddar and bacon-laced Tot Bowl.

"We believe in layering flavors," Frohne, a Nashville resident, says during a recent visit to Homewood. "Everything we do gets funneled through that."

Like any good Southerner, Holler & Dash believes in helping others. Each

store chooses a "Passion Project," a local cause that receives a portion of the restaurant's proceeds. The Homewood location picked Jones Valley Teaching Farm.

"They're teaching kids about real food, nutrition, and where food comes from," Frohne says. "Those are the kinds of things we want to support." ■

Details

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