

A Trip to Bow

Take a tour of Georgia's top agritourism destinations to see—and taste—our state's homegrown offerings.

BY ALISON MILLER

Sinking your teeth into a perfectly ripe peach picked right from the tree—that's Georgia agriculture at its sweetest. But the beloved fruit isn't the only treasure in Georgia's trove of homegrown ingredients. From olives and onions to satsumas and scuppernongs—the cornucopia of foods here mirrors the limitless ways to enjoy them. Whether it's gathering berries from a u-pick field or eating your way through a historic downtown, these handpicked agritourism destinations offer mouthwatering experiences at the places where the state's best eats are grown and prepared.



White Oak Pastures,
Bluffton



Day One

Georgia Grown Trails 37 and 41

In 2014, Georgia created its first Georgia Grown Trail, a series of farms, wineries, restaurants, and more along Highway 37. Running east-west for 160 miles, this scenic route in southwest Georgia lays claim to an olive grove, gristmill, pickle maker, and more. Vertically bisecting South Georgia, Highway 41 came next with a butcher shop, pecan company, and sugar cane farm among its 30-plus plotted points. Go the distance or make just a few stops, but drive assured that you're never far from the next tantalizing nosh spot.

georgiagrowntrails.com

White Oak Pastures, Bluffton

Transparency, animal welfare, and environmental sustainability are guiding principles for this fifth-generation family farm. Through a rotational grazing method, its diverse array of livestock and crops collectively nurtures the land and feeds the community of Bluffton and beyond. Available by appointment, guided group tours end at the open-air Dining Pavilion surrounded on all sides by rows of organic vegetables. Bring a cooler and stock up on White

ntiful

Oak's famous grass-fed beef and newly available jamón Ibérico, a succulent cured ham. whiteoakpastures.com

Mark's Melon Patch, Dawson

What started as a pickup truck bed full of watermelons has grown into a legendary market offering peanuts, cantaloupes, sweet corn, tomatoes, and more—all grown by Mark Daniels and his family. Visitors may pick strawberries in the summer or wander a five-acre corn maze in the fall. In addition to a sack full of seasonal fruits and vegetables, take home jellies, syrups, barbecue sauce, and birdhouses made from hollowed-out, dried gourds. Group tours are available by appointment. marksmelonpatch.com

OVERNIGHT IN ALBANY

2

Day Two

Lane Southern Orchards, Fort Valley

Longstanding orchards like this are what earned Georgia its "Peach State" moniker. Since 1908, Lane has grown and harvested peaches, first selling them at a humble roadside stand and now shipping them across the country. The farm now produces 35 varieties, plus pecans, strawberries, blueber-

ries, blackberries, and muscadines. Board a replica 1927 Blue Bird School bus with your group to traverse the orchards and learn about the past and present of peach growing in Middle Georgia. lanesouthernorchards.com

Dickey Farms, Musella

During peach season (mid-May through mid-August), group tours begin in the orchard and end in the packinghouse, where guests are encouraged to pluck ripe fruit from the line to taste it at its sweetest and juiciest. A

guided jaunt around this family farm, run by three generations of Dickey's, includes a scoop of homemade peach ice cream and a stop at the farm store, where you'll find all manner of peach-tinged treats. gapeaches.com



Southern Belle Farm, McDonough

Since 1938, the Carter Family has owned and operated Southern Belle, first as a dairy and now as a u-pick fruit and vegetable farm. Spring brings strawberries, followed by the blackberries, blueberries, muscadines, scuppernongs, and peaches of summer. Fall is a festive affair, complete with a pumpkin patch, corn maze, hayride, and corn cannons. Chickens, donkeys, cows, goats, and horses are on hand for meet-n-greets, and an on-site bakery turns out cakes, pies, and cobblers made with farm-fresh fruit. *southernbellefarm.com*

OVERNIGHT IN MCDONOUGH



Day Three

UGA Research and Education Garden, Griffin

Who says science isn't beautiful? Students and researchers monitor the cultivated plots of this 65-acre expanse for everything from pollination to pest control, but visitors know it as

Griffin's serene secret gardens. Groups may take free self-guided tours or schedule guided walks through the lush, themed landscapes. The takeaway? A peaceful stroll past vibrantly blooming flora complete with tips and inspiration you can take home. *caes2.caes.uga.edu/campus/griffin/garden*

The Rock Ranch, The Rock

This working farm and fun park created by the late S.

Truett Cathy, founder of Chick-fil-A, offers all-ages thrills that range from a zip line to a tree house playground. The ranch spares no expense during holidays, staging a 60,000-count Easter egg hunt and decorating nearly every square inch of the place in twinkling lights at Christmastime. Pick up Rock Ranch beef and produce at the on-site country store. Groups of 25 or more get \$2 off per person. *therockranch.com*

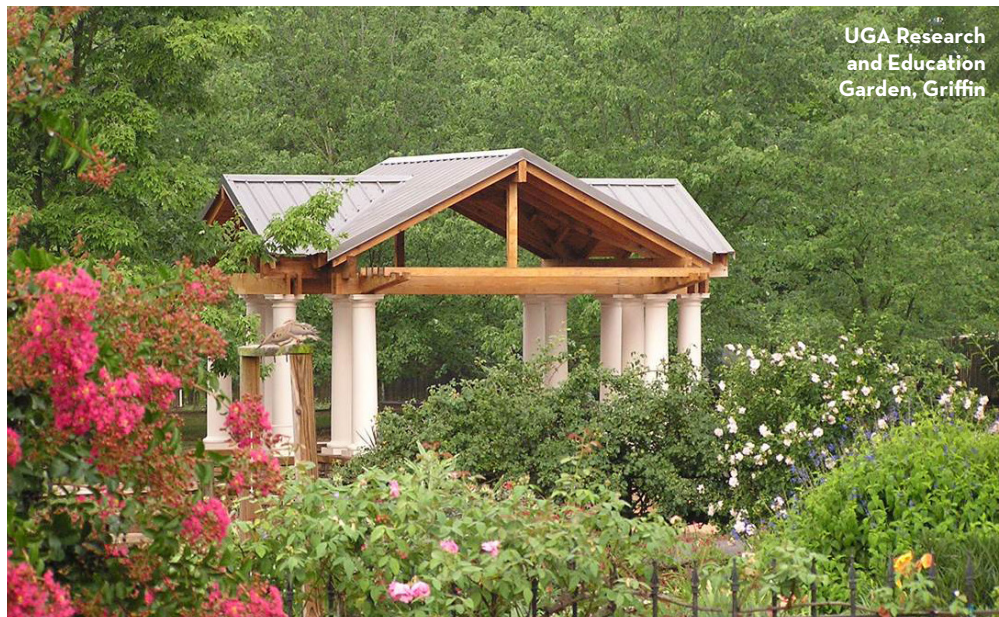


Southern Belle Farm, McDonough

DON'T-MISS DINING

Miss Kate's Deep South Tours, Valdosta

Farmer, foodie, and home cook turned tour guide Kate Valler leads walking food tours of charming downtown Valdosta. From an afternoon stroll to an evening jaunt paired with wine and live music, each tour is a progressive dinner paired with fresh air, fine food, and new friends. *misskatestours.com*



UGA Research and Education Garden, Griffin



MUST-STOP SHOPPING

Downtown Madison

Once a center for the cotton trade, historic downtown Madison is a popular destination boasting an array of locally owned shops. Three to browse: In High Cotton for furniture and home decor; Barkin' Dogs for an old-school, sit-and-fit shoe-buying experience; and the Madison Flea Market for antiques, collectibles, and a Saturday morning bluegrass jam. *visitmadisonga.com*