

BEST *of* BAMA

AWARDS 2023

Your votes have been tallied and we've got the winners!

In the following pages, we reveal readers' choices for the best of the best of Alabama's entertainment, restaurants, people and places from our northern border to our shores of the Gulf.

Who do you think should take the title of Best of Bama in 2024? Tell us!

Visit alabama-magazine.com to cast your vote!



Advertising Agency

24 Communications
Gadsden, Montgomery
24c.co

24 Communications is an award-winning, full-service marketing and advertising agency. Services include brand identity, strategic marketing, advertising, website design, public relations and content development.

Architect

Jeffrey Dungan Architects
Birmingham
jeffreydungan.com

The recipient of numerous awards and accolades, this firm designs private residences across the country. Recognized for his clean and modern approach to traditional vernaculars and classical architecture, Jeffrey Dungan discovered a love for art and drawing at a young age while growing up on a family farm in rural Alabama.

Bank

Southern States Bank
Statewide
southernstatesbank.net

Headquartered in Anniston and formed in 2007, this community bank employs bankers who work and live in the communities they serve. They have eight locations in Alabama—Anniston, Auburn, Birmingham, Huntsville, Opelika, Roanoke, Sylacauga and Wedowee.

Charity Event

Festival of Flowers
Mobile
festivalofflowers.com

As the largest outdoor flower show in the Southeast, each year festival enthusiasts eagerly anticipate the display of life-size gardens designed by regionally acclaimed landscape architects and designers. This annual event is a fundraiser for Providence Hospital.

Hospital

Children's of Alabama
Birmingham
childrensal.org

Since 1911, Children's of Alabama has provided specialized medical care for ill and injured children. Ranked among the best children's hospitals in the nation by *U.S. News & World Report*, Children's serves patients from every county in Alabama and nearly every state. With more than 3.5 million square feet, it is one of the largest pediatric medical facilities in the United States.



Plastic Surgeon / Medical Spa

The Grove Grotto & Spa
Albertville
thegrovegrottoandspa.com

A full service medical spa offering injectables, facial treatments, laser and energy treatments, as well as piercings, tattoo and tattoo removal, cryotherapy, hair restoration, bath soaks and more.

Real Estate Agency

Matlock Realty Group
Arab, Boaz, Huntsville
matlockrealtygroup.com

With three office locations, both beginners and experienced investors looking to buy or sell real estate property in North Alabama will appreciate the professionalism and knowledgeable services provided by Matlock Realty Group.

School / University

Auburn University
Auburn
auburn.edu

For 23 consecutive years, Auburn has been ranked among the best of both public and private universities. The university offers more than 150 undergraduate majors which are housed in 12 colleges. The graduate school offers a number of degree programs as well as an accelerated bachelor's / master's program.



ORION AMPHITHEATER



Amphitheater

The Orion Huntsville

theorionhuntsville.com

This is an 8,000 capacity destination and with its proximity to the iconic Muscle Shoals Sound Studio, Huntsville enjoys its status as part of the Americana Music Triangle, known for its cultural achievement as the birthplace of one of our country's greatest exports—music.



Art Festival

Arts Alive Festival Florence

alabamaartsalive.com

For 37 years this event has celebrated local and regional artists and raised money for art scholarships and grants. At this festival Florence transforms into one of the largest art markets in the state as more than 80 juried artists converge on Wilson Park to sell their work from colorful booths.

Art Gallery

Coastal Arts Center Orange Beach

coastalartscenter.com

This multi-studio campus overlooks scenic Wolf Bay and offers many artistic experiences with a breathtaking view. The 10,000 square-foot fine art gallery features a spacious two-story building displaying works by Gulf Coast artists.



Art Museum

Jule Collins Smith Museum Auburn

jcsmauburn.edu

This jewel of a museum has seven galleries with more than 1,500 works of art. Styles range from classical to modern including late 19th- and 20th-century European modernist pieces by Renoir, Matisse, Picasso and Dali as well as 14th-century sculptures from Tibet, India and China.

Bed and Breakfast

The Fairhope Inn Fairhope

thefairhopeinn.com

Landing on the National Register of Historic Places in 1988, this historic inn and restaurant offers casually elegant décor, exquisite bedding and well-appointed details topped with a classic southern breakfast.

Garden

Bellingrath Gardens Theodore

bellingrath.org

There is always something blooming at Bellingrath Gardens. Summer is all about roses, hydrangeas and tropicals, fall brings cascading chrysanthemums. Winter brings more than 400 varieties of camellias—Alabama's State Flower and in spring, azaleas are everywhere.

Golf Course

Highland Oaks Dothan

rtjgolf.com

Located in the southeast corner of Alabama, Highland Oaks offers three 9-hole championship courses as well as the 9-hole Short Course. The Highlands/Magnolia combination was named by *Golf Digest* as one of the nation's Great Value Courses. This 36-hole complex features some of the longest and most classically designed holes on the Trail. Each nine has a different personality.

Heritage Tour

Eufaula Spring Pilgrimage Eufaula

eufaulapilgrimage.com

With more than 700 structures listed on the National Historic Register, the city's main street is lined with dogwoods, magnolias and oaks. It is flanked by antebellum mansions that "rise like ornate wedding cakes," as described by Alabama Tourism director Lee Sentell, author of *The Best of Alabama*. This event is held annually on the first weekend in April.



Historic Landmark

American Village Montevallo

americanvillage.org

Experience the power and drama of America's founding. American Village serves the nation as an educational institution whose mission is to strengthen and renew the foundations of American liberty and self-government by engaging and inspiring visitors, with a special emphasis on programs for young people.

Hotel / Resort

The Stricklin Hotel Florence

thestricklin.com

Located on the second and third floors of the historic Stricklin Building, The first-floor houses the infamous Big Bad Breakfast, while the basement of the building, called The Boiler Room, has four vintage-style bowling lanes, live music, karaoke and a full restaurant and bar.

Music Festival

Hangout Music Festival Gulf Shores

hangoutmusicfest.com

This annual three-day music festival held on the white sand beaches of Gulf Shores has featured notable acts such as The Red Hot Chili Peppers, Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers, Widespread Panic and many more. In addition to music, the festival provides a full size roller rink, beach volleyball, multiple stages, food and DJs.





Vacation Destination

Mentone Mentone

mentonealabama.gov

Mentone is a quaint, welcoming mountain village nestled atop the west brow of Lookout Mountain in northeast Alabama. Natural beauty abounds, from scenic mountain-top views to the mists of a 104 foot waterfall. Generations of people have made Mentone an ideal place to live, work and visit.



Bartender

Matt Ortega Huntsville

catacomb435.com

Serving unordinary libations in an unordinary setting, Ortega upholds the vibe of Huntsville's speakeasy—Catacomb 435. He incorporates a wide variety of mixology techniques and exciting ingredients such as turmeric, sugar snap pea, rose, wasabi and lavender to name a few.

Performing Arts

Huntsville Ballet Huntsville

huntsvilleballet.org

The mission of the Huntsville Ballet is to preserve and teach the classical art of ballet—to bring the artistry of classical and contemporary dance to the Huntsville community and beyond through performances, education and outreach programs.

Wedding Venue

Gabrella Manor Birmingham

gabrellamanor.com

This Spanish colonial revival residence is a restored landmark sitting at the edge of the Roebuck Springs Historic District. A popular destination for celebrations such as weddings and anniversaries, the two-story venue features a terra cotta roof, turreted entry way, stained glass windows and multiple patios and terraces.

Bakery

Edgar's Statewide

edgarsbakery.com

This seven-time Best of Bama winner has 10 locations throughout the state. Serving elaborate confections and pastries alongside breakfast, soups, salads, sandwiches and more, the various establishments also sell gifts and offer nationwide shipping.

Brewery

Good People Brewing Company Birmingham

goodpeoplebrewing.com

Ranked as having the top selling IPA in Alabama for the last 10 years, this brewery features an extensive menu of seasonal brews, limited releases and standard labels. Enjoy brews in cans, bottles and on draft in the taproom. Tours are also available.

Salon / Spa

The Soak House & Soapery Guntersville

soakhousespa.com

Offering luxurious therapeutic mineral soaks to melt away stress and leave skin feeling amazing, this two-time winner allows guests to tone, hydrate and soothe aching muscles. A quick drive from Huntsville and Madison County but just far enough away to feel like an escape, experience their exceptional spa getaway for yourself.

Zoo

Tigers For Tomorrow Attalla

tigersfortomorrow.org

With a mission to uphold the highest standards of care and respect for native and exotic animals in need of secure permanent homes, this wild animal preserve and rescue is open to the community as an environmental education learning center and recreational destination for the entire family.

Bar

Flora-Bama Orange Beach

florabama.com

One of the world's top beach bars, this lounge, package and oyster bar is located uniquely on the Alabama and Florida state line. This honky tonk has long been a landmark in the community since 1964 and has five stages for live music. The lounge also has several beach-front bars to sip on their famous Bushwacker and enjoy the beautiful Gulf sunsets.

Brunch

Classic on Noble Anniston

classiconnoble.com

Housed in the restored 1894 Levy and Clark building in the historic downtown district, Classic on Noble serves a variety of soups and salads as well as their famous jumbo white Gulf shrimp scampi served over grits with fresh collard greens, Andouille sausage, tomatoes and bacon topped with shaved Parmesan cheese.

Barbeque Joint

LawLer's North Alabama

lawlersbarbecue.com

With a dozen locations spread throughout North Alabama, this small-town enterprise has realized such demand that they are still expanding. They offer slow-cooked pork, chicken, ham and turkey as well as their signature sauces—Sweet Red BBQ, Tangy White, Mild Vinegar and Hot.

Burger

Callaghan's Irish Social Club Mobile

callaghansirishsocialclub.com

This is the tenth win for Best of Bama and this Callaghan's burger has racked up awards from a number of other regional and national publications. Also enjoy live music and an award-winning bar scene.





Butcher Shop

Mark's Mart
Northport, Selma
chickenswirl.com

This locally-owned enterprise specializes in high-quality cut-to-order meats, fine wines and specialty items. Mark's Mart is the home of the original Chicken Swirl. Serving central Alabama and its surrounding areas since 1978, enjoy a wide selection of beef, pork, chicken, seafood and prepared foods.

Café

Nola on Second
Gadsden
facebook.com

This is a Creole-inspired restaurant with a French Quarter feel. While menu items change often, expect the likes of Catfish Atchafalaya, Cajun Fried Calamari, Nola Muffuletta and Po' Boys alongside drink specials such as Hurricanes, Nola Blues and Voodoo Punch.

Caterer

Jim 'N Nick's Bar-B-Q
Statewide
jimnicks.com

In 1985, this Birmingham-based, father and son venture launched into what popularity would spin into a Southern institution. Now with 37 locations in seven states, with 17 in Alabama, they offer a Delivery Only catering choice as well as a Set Up And Serve option.

Chef

Brandon Crosby
Huntsville
chuppertimecatering.com

Having worked as a touring chef for musicians and bands such as Jason Aldean, Zac Brown Band, Florida Georgia Line and John Mayer, Chef Crosby took his love of cooking and opened his own catering business called Chupper Time Catering. He has won many awards and has been featured on Food Network where in 2017 he won an episode of *Cooks vs. Cons*.

Coffee House

Karma's Coffee House
Cullman
karmacoffeehouse.com

With a full menu of Espresso, Cappuccino, Cortado, Cubano, Americano and more, Karma's is a gathering place for the community. Also serving snacks and sweets, Katie and Jacob Fine have been serving cups of Joe since 2015.

Fine Dining

SpringHouse
Alexander City
springhouseatcrossroads.com

SpringHouse utilizes locally and regionally sourced flavors to create a modern version of Southern classical cuisine. While the style is modern, inspiration is drawn from the rich history of the region and classic sensibilities. Daily updates of the menu reflect the best of what is available.



Steak

Corks and Cattle
Enterprise
corksandcattle.com

This three-time Best of Bama winner serves up the best Certified Angus Beef in the Wiregrass. The dinner menu includes a 14-ounce house-cut New York Strip, a 16-ounce Ribeye and an 8-ounce Filet Mignon which is chargrilled and topped with a red wine shallot sauce.

Pizza

Joe's Pizza & Pasta
Mobile
facebook.com

Serving authentic New York style pies, patrons can build their own with more than 25 toppings or choose a specialty or stuffed pizza. Locally owned and operated, Joe's also serves a selection of pasta dishes, calzones, salads and desserts.

Seafood

Chuck's Fish
Athens, Birmingham, Mobile,
Montgomery, Tuscaloosa
chucksfish.com

Showcasing the best seafood from the Gulf of Mexico, all of the featured fish comes from their own wholesale market at Harbor Docks. Chuck's has won numerous Best of Bama awards for both their seafood and their sushi.

Sushi

Sushi Cafe
Montgomery
montgomerysushicafe.com

With a full service sushi bar sitting front and center in the restaurant, patrons can watch the rolls being prepared with the freshest seafood and vegetables around. They also offer Bento Boxes which include a salad, tempura, rice and a choice of teriyaki meat. Voted Best of the Best in 2021 by the *Montgomery Advertiser*.

Specialty Grocery Boutique

Benson Farms
Grant
bensonfarmsal.com

Jason and Casandra Benson maintain a herd of roughly 25 brood cows with calves and a registered Black Angus bull. Grazing freely on 200 acres of green pastures covered in fescue and other native grasses, their livestock is hormone free, antibiotic free and even vaccine free as the herd is not subjected to the diseases the large meat packing herds face. Their meat is harvested at its peak and shipped for free right to your door.



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Antiques

Southern Accents Architectural Antiques
Cullman
sa1969.com

It all started in 1969 when Dr. Garlan Gudger started rescuing architectural objects from buildings slated to be demolished in his local community of Cullman. Today his small collection once sold from his garage has flourished into one of the largest stores of its kind in the nation, now run by his son Garlan Jr. and wife Heather.

Bridal Boutique

I Do Bridal & Formal
Mobile, Montgomery
idobridalformal.com

A full-service bridal and formal wear boutique with a range of sizes including plus clothing. Also outfitting men for special occasions, this is a one-stop-shop for the entire wedding party.

Children's Clothing

Caroline & Company
Trussville
instagram: @carolineandco.kids

Carrying popular brands such as Feltman Brothers, Properly Tied, Angel Dear, Kissy Kissy and Pixie Lily, this boutique offers clothing from sleep and playtime to Sunday best. They also carry accessories and nursery décor and offer a baby registry as well.

Florist

Dorothy McDaniel's Flower Market
Birmingham
dorothymcdaniel.com

For more than 40 years this flower boutique has offered everything from simple bouquets to elaborate arrangements and they deliver throughout the Greater Birmingham area. Designing for weddings and all types of events, they also decorate homes and businesses for the holidays.

Furniture & Interiors

Birmingham Wholesale
Birmingham
birminghamwholesale.com

Serving Alabama for 65 years with a 65,000 square-foot showroom, this locally owned and operated furniture store carries luxury brands such as Hooker Furniture, Hickory White, Den Design, Lexington, Marge Carson, Vanguard, Maitland-Smith and more.

Gift Shop

Table Matters
Mountain Brook
table-matters.com

Specializing in entertainment trimmings, pottery from all over the world and unique table linens, Table Matters provides in-home consultations for accessorizing your home and setting your table. They also offer a bridal registry with free delivery within the Birmingham area.



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Shopping

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Jeweler

Ware Jewelers
Auburn, Opelika, Montgomery,
Spanish Fort
warejewelers.com

Carrying luxury lines such as David Yurman, Roberto Coin, John Hardy, Omega and TAG Heuer among others, this fourth-generation family business is the oldest continuously operating family jeweler in the Auburn area—their original location.

Mall

The Wharf
Orange Beach
alwharf.com

This outdoor mall features more than 30 retail stores, 15 eateries, nearly 10 bars and tasting rooms and roughly 15 entertainment establishments. Anchored by a festive Ferris wheel and boasting a marina and amphitheater, guests can stay at the onsite hotel or stay in one of their condos.

Men's Boutique

East Bay Clothiers
Fairhope
eastbayclothiers.com

This boutique has fine clothing for any well-dressed man for all walks of life. From casual to dressy and

featuring a full line of accessories from shoes to grooming essentials, East Bay Clothiers also offers custom tailoring, luggage and gifts.

Outlet Mall

The Shops of Grand River
Leeds
shopsofgrandriver.com

Shop favorite brands like Michael Kors, Polo Ralph Lauren, Tommy Hilfiger, J.Crew, Kate Spade, Coach and more. More than a mall, enjoy a dog park, drive-in movie theater, miniature golf and seasonal events.

Specialty Boutique

The Cupboard
Decatur
shopthecupboard.com

For ten years, this gourmet cook shop has been carrying items unable to be found in big box stores. Featuring specialty and locally-made products and foods, classes are periodically offered such as Creating Your Own Charcuterie Board, Knife Skills or Growing Your Own Herbs.

Women's Boutique

Tula J Boutique
Trussville
tulajboutique.com

Celebrating 10 years, this boutique carries clothing, shoes and accessories ahead of fashion trends for any age, size or occasion. They offer a southern-chic style in their brick-and-mortar shop as well as an online store.

