

THE ST. REGIS ATLANTA

Bespoke

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MA

From Friends to Forever

A WEDDING AT THE ST. REGIS



*Spring
Fling*
ATLANTA'S
BEST FESTIVALS

*A Weekend at
the St. Regis*

*An Ideal Day
in Atlanta*





Atlanta Dogwood Festival



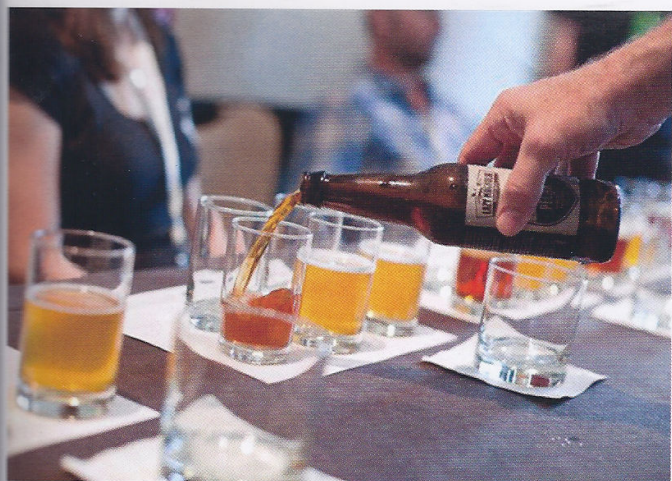
TOP AND BOTTOM PHOTOS COURTESY OF ATLANTA FOOD & WINE FESTIVAL/RAFTMEN

Spring Fling

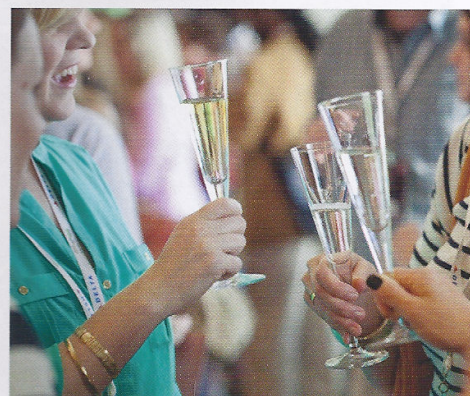
Explore some of Atlanta's best festivals this season.

BY BRET LOVE

WHEN YOU CONSIDER ATLANTA'S BLAZING HOT SUMMERS AND RELATIVELY SHORT, snow-less winters, perhaps it's no surprise that spring ranks as a favorite season for most Atlanta residents. With the temperature climate and dogwoods and azaleas in full bloom, it's the perfect time of year for outdoor festivals celebrating art, cuisine, music and more. Here, *Bespoke Magazine* uncovers some of the best festivals to commemorate this time of year.



Atlanta FOOD & WINE Festival



ATLANTA DOGWOOD FESTIVAL

APRIL 19 - 21; PIEDMONT PARK

Celebrating its 77th anniversary in 2013, the Atlanta Dogwood Festival (ADF) is not just the oldest fine arts festival in Georgia; it's also the third oldest in the country.

The tradition started back in 1936 by Rich's department store founder Walter Rich, who thought the festival would help attract international attention to the city's dogwood trees, which typically bloomed during the weeklong event. With help from garden clubs and other civic-minded citizens, dogwoods were planted all across Atlanta, and performances included the Metropolitan Opera and Philadelphia Symphony.

Over time the festival grew bigger, drawing artists from all across the country, attracting crowds of more than 200,000 people and pumping an estimated \$50 million into the city's economy. But in 2008, severe drought conditions forced organizers to move the event away from its historic home at Piedmont Park to Lenox Square, where it was downsized considerably. The festival was reimagined as a three-day event, eventually returning to Piedmont Park with a radically different

layout that would allow it to stretch throughout the entirety of the green space, minimizing the environmental impact on specific areas.

"One highlight is our International Stage, with vibrant performers representing more than 20 cultures from around the world and illustrating the diversity of our local community," says ADF Executive Director Brian Hill. "Two other unique elements are our Eco-Village, which has won the top international environmental award for two years in a row, and our high school art exhibition. Year after year, it inspires students to pursue their talents."

Other features of this year's festival include live musical performances through the weekend, the ever-popular Disc Dog competition, upscale foodie fare in the park's bathhouse pavilion, a Kid's Village (featuring kid-friendly exhibits, interactive art projects and a climbing wall) and classical carnival rides such as a nine-story Ferris wheel and vintage carousel. (404-817-6642; dogwood.org)

ATLANTA FOOD & WINE FESTIVAL

MAY 30 - JUNE 2; MIDTOWN

Although it's one of the newer kids on the spring festival block, the idea behind the

Atlanta FOOD & WINE Festival actually dates back to 2006. Dominique Love and Elizabeth Feichter, co-owners of a consulting firm that helps corporations and nonprofits maximize their community impact, were hired by FOOD & WINE Magazine to design a charitable campaign (eventually known as Grow for Good) commemorating the 25th anniversary of the FOOD & WINE Classic in Aspen.

Love and Feichter's visits to Aspen left them wondering why Atlanta didn't have a festival that showcased the rich food and beverage traditions of the entire Southeast region. But it wasn't until February 2010, when the duo sat down for drinks with Yeah! Burger chef Shaun Doty, that they finally decided it was time to make that dream become a reality.

"In some ways people have done it before," Love explains, when asked what makes her festival unique. "Taste of Atlanta has been very successful in showcasing the Atlanta restaurant scene. But our mission was to do more than just focus on Atlanta: Our goal is to shine a national spotlight on the rich food and beverage traditions of our entire region and to position Atlanta as



Atlanta Jazz Festival

the gateway to that region. We really wanted to give a voice to the South, and no one has done that before. We're proud of what's going on in our region, and we want to be part of showcasing it to the world."

Now in its third year, the festival has emerged as a Southern foodie favorite, attracting expert chefs, brewers and farmers from throughout the Southeast. While the inaugural 2011 festival was focused on more broad topics and 2012 covered wild game, foraging, sustainable seafood and how we source our food, Love suggests that the 2013 festival program will delve much deeper into farming and agriculture, craft beer and wine and exploring the rich tradition of Southern culture through music and food.

"We're not so much focused on being bigger as we are on being better," Love says. "We've got some interesting topics, and we're really challenging our talent to roll up their sleeves and get even more creative, tackling topics that have not been addressed in other food festivals. We're constantly focused on our guest experience to make sure they're walking away feeling really full, both mentally and physically, enriched by our overall weekend." (404-474-7330; atlfoodandwinefestival.com)

ATLANTA JAZZ FESTIVAL

MAY 25 - 27; PIEDMONT PARK

If you want to trace the roots of Atlanta's rebirth as the cultural mecca of the South, you have to go all the way back to 1974, and the historic election that resulted in Maynard Jackson becoming the city's first African American mayor.

It was Jackson who established Atlanta's Office of Cultural Affairs at the beginning of his term in office, and who suggested spotlighting the city's jazz scene.

Originally known in 1978 as the Atlanta Free Jazz Festival, the Memorial Day weekend event is always free to the public and remains focused on combining the biggest names from the international jazz community with the best and brightest artists Atlanta has to offer. Last year's festival included legendary names such as Roy Ayers, the Cyrus Chestnut Trio, Tito Puente Jr. & Orchestra and the Robert Glasper Experiment.

One local artist who has performed at the festival multiple times is drummer/band leader Ernest Coleman III (also known as "EC3"), a regular fixture on the national African Cuban jazz circuit. Coleman, the co-owner of Rhythm Universal Records, recalls growing up in a time where the marked racial divide made being black

in Atlanta challenging, to say the least.

"Atlanta has changed so much over the years," he says. "And when you go to the Atlanta Jazz Festival and see everyone coming together for the sake of music, it makes me smile. The quality of artists the festival offers brings all types of cultures and lifestyles out, and it's nothing but a party atmosphere. I'm honored to have been a part of it." (404-546-6820; atlantafestivals.com)

DECATUR ARTS FESTIVAL

MAY 25 - 26; DOWNTOWN DECATUR

Though it may be located on the east side of the metro area, Decatur is arguably the artsy, bohemian heart of the city, maintaining a relatively close-knit, small-town feel despite its geographical proximity to downtown Atlanta.

In this upscale community, homey brewpubs and foodie-friendly restaurants rub shoulders with trendy boutiques and chic art galleries, making it a haven for college students (Emory University and Agnes Scott College) and young families with progressive ideals.

This annual event, now in its 25th year, features more than 150 fine artists and craftsmen from the Southeast and beyond through a competitive jury selection process. From ceramics and jewelry to



Georgia Renaissance Festival

painting, sculpture and woodworking, individual artists and collectives such as the Georgia Goldsmith's Group, Callanwolde Clay Guild and Atlanta Glass Guild represent nearly every field.

The festival also includes a children's section (located on the lawn of the First Baptist Church of Decatur), live musical performances on the Community Bandstand, dance performances at the Beacon Hill Art Center, a silent auction and enough food options to suit any appetite. (404-371-9583; decaturartsfestival.com)

GEORGIA RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL

APRIL 13 - JUNE 2; FAIRBURN, GA.

If you've ever watched "The Lord of the Rings" films or episodes of "Game of Thrones" and wished you could spend time in those magical medieval realms, a day at the Georgia Renaissance Festival is arguably the next best thing. Sprawled across 32 acres in the middle of the woods in rural Fairburn, this immense living history attraction is a Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA) member's dreams come true.

In fact, many SCA members can be counted amongst the elaborately costumed characters that inhabit the realm, which is set during the 16th century reign of King Henry VIII. From jugglers, musicians and storytellers to peasants, armored knights and King Henry's royal court, the festival's actors interact freely with guests and never break character. And since patrons are encouraged to dress up as well, the line dividing reality from fantasy tends to be blurry at best.

There is also a large children's section featuring rides, games, a petting zoo and the ever-popular



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— BECKY CORMIER FINCH

"Birds of Prey" show, as well as more than 150 artisans selling goods ranging from handmade pottery and hand-blown glass to intricate period costumes and remarkable weapon reproductions. The resulting effect, which is like walking through a bustling British village in the 1500s, has kept loyalists coming back ever since the first festival in 1985.

"I've been a musician there on and off since 1994," says Becky Cormier Finch of the band Three Quarter Ale. "I think people keep coming back because it's this familiar place where they can see King Henry and Queen Anne and all these beloved characters they recognize." (770-964-8575; garenfest.com)

INMAN PARK FESTIVAL AND TOUR OF HOMES

APRIL 26 - 28; INMAN PARK

Officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973, Inman Park was originally developed in the 1880s as Atlanta's first planned community. Though the community fell into decline in the 1950s, the neighborhood has had a renaissance in the last few decades, and currently

has more than 300 homes in various stages of renovation or restoration.

This annual festival welcomes visitors to the "small-town downtown" for a two-day celebration, which includes parades, live entertainment, street parties and a tour of some of the neighborhood's most beautiful historic houses. The event is a unique celebration of both small-town living and urban progressiveness, attracting revelers from all across the metro-Atlanta area.

"We've been lucky to call Inman Park home for our entire 18-year existence," says Lara Smith, managing director of the Dad's Garage improv comedy theater company. "Over the years, we've seen the festival grow and change, and we're always glad to be part of the theater night and participate in the parade. The festival is the perfect embodiment of everything this neighborhood stands for: great art, food and drink and everyone getting together to celebrate." (inmanparkfestival.org)

The spring season in Atlanta affords many opportunities to experience some of the city's best festivals. Whether it's jazz or cuisine from Atlanta's top restaurants, the city's natives and visitors come together to celebrate the season. 🍷