



## Burgers with a Side of Nostalgia

Mississippi's Slugburger Trail offers a taste of history

BY CAROLINE EUBANKS

during the Great Depression, locals in parts of Mississippi, Tennessee, and Alabama sought to stretch their meat further during meat rationing times. They mixed flour, soy, and other products in with pork and beef, calling them “slug burgers” or “dough burgers,” selling for a nickel, aka a “slug.”

While they’ll no longer set you back only five cents, you’ll still find the affordable dish throughout the region, served on a bun with pickles, onion, and mustard. Mississippi even has a Slugburger Trail, honoring the places that made it famous, mostly centered on the town of Corinth, which hosts an annual Slugburger Festival in July. Most of these spots are cash only, so come prepared.

### JOHNNIE’S DRIVE IN, TUPELO

Eat like a King at Johnnie’s Drive In, a restaurant dating back to 1945 in Elvis Presley’s hometown. The music legend is honored with a plaque at his usual booth, where you can see a photo of him in the same seat and order his favorite dish. “At Johnnie’s, we cook our dough burgers on a flat top grill. We have a recipe for our dough burger, which is a secret,” says owner Christi White. She took over the restaurant from her parents, who bought the restaurant from the original owners in 1980.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: JEFF JONES; COURTESY OF VISIT MISSISSIPPI; COURTESY OF LATHAM'S HAMBURGER INN; OPPOSITE: COURTESY OF VISIT TOLEDO

### LATHAM’S HAMBURGER INN, NEW ALBANY

This jewel box restaurant opened in 1928 in a converted alley. The space has a narrow counter with antique signs on the walls and Thelma, a mannequin in a diner uniform, in the window to welcome guests. Guests come for the dough burger, which has remained relatively unchanged over the years, washed down with a Coca-Cola, once bottled in town. “I purchased in the end of 2016,” says owner Holly Holland. “Our burgers differ from most in the region because they are fried in a cast-iron skillet. We use beef and a flour mix, which is also different than most, as many in the area use pork and a soybean filler.”

### SLUGBURGER CAFE, CORINTH

This bustling restaurant on US-72 opens early to serve the locals, who settle on the barstools for a hearty breakfast.

A restaurant has been on this site since the 1970s, but the current incarnation opened in 2003. Slugburger Cafe’s namesake dish stands on its own. “We use pork in ours,” says longtime employee Fred Sothmeyer of the recipe. “Potato meal, grits, and pork.” In addition to the burgers, the cafe serves biscuits and sandwiches.

### BORROUM’S DRUGSTORE, CORINTH

Set in an 1843 former tannery, Borroum’s Drugstore is the oldest drug store in continuous operation in Mississippi, still run by the original family. The soda fountain-style space has a handful of tables, counter seating, white checkered floors, and old medicines on the walls along with Civil War memorabilia and arrowheads. It’s run by Lex and Debbie Mitchell, son



and daughter-in-law of Camille Borroum Mitchell, the first female pharmacy graduate of the University of Mississippi. The slugburger here has a lot of flavor and pairs well with a Blue Bell milkshake and well-seasoned “spicy fries.”

### WHITE TROLLEY CAFE, CORINTH

Tillman Griffin and Bill Davenport opened the White Trolley Cafe after World War II. There was originally a real trolley out front, but now it’s just the brick building that bears the name. Jeremiah Dees runs it today and has been working there since high school. The burger itself may not be so different from what you’ll find elsewhere in town, but the 18-stool spot is beloved by Corinthians. “A lot of people have been coming here for years. I guess folks have a lot of good memories coming here, so they come back,” says Dees.