

Explore the city's many food options

By CARRIE GIVENS
THE GAMECOCK

This weekend is officially USC's Parents Weekend. That means many students will have visitors — in the form of mom and dad and any siblings they can coerce into the car. Most students will want to impress their parents with their newly found responsibility, amazing first exam grades and spotlessly clean dorm rooms.

There are additional perks when parents visit for the weekend. Grocery shopping sprees, a trip to the local mall and a much-needed influx of cash are welcome additions. With all this assistance, it is only right that you find a way to pay your parents back. And since college life has taken a toll on your bank account, you need to find an alternative way to say "Thank You."

Here's an idea: Take your parents out to dinner. Branch out from the Russell House Grand Marketplace, and venture to a neighborhood restaurant that has a pleasant ambience and tasty entrées.

There are many eateries close to USC's campus. Some are within walking distance while others are just a short drive away. A myriad of restaurants dot the Devine Street and Harbison areas and populate Five Points and The Vista. The restaurants differ greatly in price, atmosphere, and menu selections.

The first thing to keep in mind when choosing an ideal restaurant is to pick a place that your parents will genuinely like. Restaurants such as Applebee's, Carabbas, Red Lobster and Olive Garden can all be found in the Columbia area.

However if you wish to take your parents to a restaurant not found in your hometown, there are plenty of local alternatives. Second-year biology student Lauren Nelson suggests treating parents to a dinner at Harper's, California Dreaming or Yesterday's.

With entrees averaging in the \$8-\$15 range, Nelson noted that these restaurants are "nice ... and not McDonald's."

Starting with an appetizer of honey-buttered croissants and an impressive salad, California Dreaming boasts a menu of marinated chicken, broiled salmon and filet mignon, along with sandwiches and salads.

At the crossroads of Five Points, parents can enjoy dining at Harper's or Yesterday's. Harper's has a refined ambience; whereas, Yesterday's has a more relaxed atmosphere. Nelson concluded that the perfect restaurant choice "depends on your parents" and what they will enjoy.

For Mediterranean cuisine, second-year chemistry student Laura Stuck recommended visiting the Mediterranean Tea Room, Al-Amir, or Thai Lotus. Stuck admits that "all are really good," but each is unique in its own way.

Stuck remarked that Al-Amir is more expensive, but has a cultural feel that is lacking at the Mediterranean Tea Room. At Al-Amir, she said, "You have to get bread with hummus."

When dining at the Mediterranean Tea Room, Stuck enjoys the grilled chicken and "really good desserts."

She added that Thai Lotus on Saint Andrews Road has really good Thai cuisine. Combining Thai spices, Stuck remarked that Thai Lotus's "Green curry is best."

There is no shortage of restaurants in Columbia. Whether you favor Mexican, Chinese, or American cuisine, it can all be found. Just remember to pick a restaurant your parents will enjoy — and offer to pick up the tab.

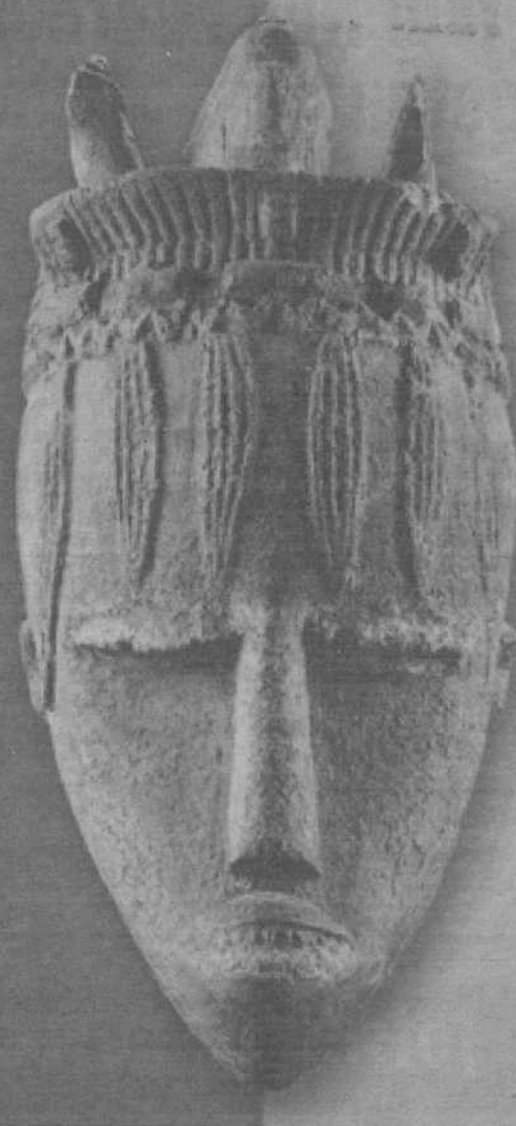
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ANNA HUNTLEY/THE GAMECOCK

California Dreaming, a popular option for many students wanting to impress their families, serves up marinated chicken, broiled salmon and filet mignon.

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