

An Evening in Chapel Hill

Don't miss these happening hot spots during your next visit to North Carolina.

I thought I was cool. Boy, was I wrong.

When The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill undergraduates kept calling me "ma'am" during my last visit, it dawned on me that I no longer look like them. Still faced with the daunting task of uncovering spots to hang out in this young college town, I questioned, probed, and pleaded with students, including seniors Becky Werner and Elena Strauss, to help me. Not only did they clue me in and show me where the locals go, they also reassured me that I wouldn't feel uncomfortable when I arrived.

This lively Southern town welcomes visitors by day and by night, no matter if you're still an undergraduate or if you've long since gotten that diploma. Here are the see-and-be-seen restaurants and bars as well as a coffee haunt you won't want to miss.

Top of the Hill Restaurant and Brewery. This eatery's location, overlooking downtown Chapel Hill from a vast third-floor patio, is the best in town. Order something simple, such as a hamburger or pizza and one of the microbrewed beers, and skip the fancy entrées. Elena says, "Top of the Hill is



PHOTOGRAPHS: AMY JO YOUNG

A colorful 60-foot-long hand-tiled bar distinguishes West End Wine Bar.

great at night. You can see all of Franklin Street." 100 East Franklin Street; (919) 929-8676. Entrées: \$7.95-\$29.95.

La Residence Restaurant & Bar. Called "La Rez" by locals, this spot wins as one of the favorite places to eat from the folks I queried. Offering inside dining on white tablecloths and a quaint weatherproof patio, the atmosphere is both romantic and charming. Try the fennel seed-rubbed filet mignon with celery root mashed potatoes (\$26.95). 202 West Rosemary Street; (919) 967-2506. Entrées: \$19-\$28.

Lantern Restaurant. The muted-green walls and Nelson Bubble Lamps perfectly fit the Asian-inspired decor of this minimalist yet elegant restaurant. The flavorful Asian menu, which features daily specials, draws quite a crowd, so get here early to ensure a table. 423 West Franklin; (919) 969-8846. Entrées: start at \$13.

West End Wine Bar. This swanky bar features around 100 wines by the glass, plus imported beers. Roam the three floors of stylish surroundings filled with overstuffed sofas, or hang



left and above: At four eleven west, choose to eat inside the Tuscan-decorated dining room or on the charming patio.



Locals fill the wooden booths of Carolina Coffee Shop for their daily jolt of java as well as for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

four eleven west. Becky and Elena say this Italian restaurant is the place to go when you want to celebrate something special. I agree. Known for homemade pastas, crispy-crust pizzas (cooked in a wood-burning oven), steaks, seafood, and its famous dill rolls, this small venue has successfully brought Italy to North Carolina. *411 West Franklin Street; (919) 967-2782. Entrées: \$12.95-\$19.95.*

Carolina Coffee Shop. This cozy java joint serves as neighborhood

hangout by day and mellow meeting bar by night. The better-than-expected lunch and dinner menus feature daily specials such as shrimp and grits on Wednesdays and fish and chips on Fridays. *138 East Franklin; (919) 942-6875. Lunch specials: start at \$7.95. Dinner specials: \$12.95-\$16.95.*

He's Not Here. Opened in 1973, this evening joint is one of the oldest in the area with live music played throughout the week April through October. The big draw? The classic 33-ounce Carolina blue cups that you can take home after you finish your beer. *112½ West Franklin Street; (919) 942-7939.*

JENNIFER MCKENZIE FRAZIER

out on the rooftop patio. The wine-inspired menu includes cheese and meat plates, as well as olives and salted almonds. *450 Franklin Street; (919) 967-7599. Appetizers: \$4-\$9.*

