

Barb's Country Kitchen in Eufaula, Alabama, isn't owned by Barb

U.S. Highway 431 stretches from the Chattahoochee Riverwalk of Columbus, Georgia, to the peanut city of Dothan, Alabama. It's towering pines and wide blue skies hide the danger in this road.

This 'Highway to Hell', as it is [reportedly named](#), is the nation's fourth most dangerous road because drivers speed down its seemingly free and open lanes.

But, the luscious green pines and the wide blue sky makes this threat a beautiful one.

After the single turn [at Anthony's Museum of Wonder](#), the sea of pine trees becomes thicker and the landscape of rocks and orange dirt becomes the only surrounding presence for miles. As a green sign reads 'Entering Barbour County', the smallness of the road seems inviting as the county greets its guests with a sunshine-filled smile.

The sky opens wider, but not because of the mountains, but because of the valleys and the expanses of newly budding trees that line the thin and twisting road. The sky rivals that of Montana, the land of 'Big Sky Country'.

As a winding hill approaches, a canopy of flowering dogwoods and blushing green oaks provide shade over North Eufaula Avenue. Grandiose and historic homes lining the avenue feels like a scene from a classic southern romance movie.

The drive into the humble town makes the guest feel like the town has its arms wide open. Immediately after passing its 'City of Eufaula' sign, visitors are welcomed by azaleas of pink, red, white, and purple, as if they were colorful presents around the Christmas tree on December 25.

A statue of Manny the fish in downtown Eufaula reads 'Big Bass Capital of the World'. The town takes pride in Lake Eufaula and their prize-winning bass status that draws anglers into town.

However, an unexpected lure down on the south side of Eufaula Avenue, also catches the attention of both locals and tourists.

After following Eufaula Avenue down to the South side, a sign outside reads 'Barb's Country Kitchen' in thick black letters a bit too big for the building's size with a red spoon and fork above that reels you in.

Barb's Country Kitchen first opened in a Historical Building in downtown Eufaula in 1999, when Barbara McKee first offered her homemade country cooking to the town of Eufaula.

Ms. Barb sold the business to Pierre and Bernard, whose last names wish to be left anonymous. They are two Black men who are life partners, as of 2018. The transition was relatively smooth, according to Pierre.

Pierre decided to make Eufaula his home after living in Atlanta, New York, and North Carolina. He said he believes this place is different than the cities with skyscrapers and taxis

because of the ‘Disney character love’ that Eufaula shares with one another, despite cultural, socioeconomic, or sexual orientation differences.

Barb’s Country Kitchen doesn’t only cater to small-town locals; it attracts customers from all over the country.

“We get people all the way from Panama City, and guests who plan their trips around Barbs and call to make sure we are open before we leave,” Pierre said.

Many satisfied visitors come back to Barb’s for the memories made in small-town Alabama. A customer from Florida is a regular at Barb’s Country Kitchen to buy the famous buttermilk pie because he proposed to his wife at the restaurant over a slice of the pie.

Pierre said he believes that customers continue their unwavering faithfulness to the restaurant, no matter how far they travel from, because of the food and the customer service.

“Everyone is like family, and Bernard and I try to make it that way,” Pierre said.

Chicken dressing, mac n cheese, broccoli chicken cheese casserole, and classic Jiffy Cornbread are what many customers believe is worthy of traveling to from afar. Most of these southern recipes are Bernard’s creations, though some were passed down from Ms. Barb.

The mac n cheese is warm and creamy, blanketed with a thick layer of shredded cheddar cheese; the chicken dressing takes a southern classic to buttery and rich heights; the Jiffy Cornbread is plain as can be, but nobody makes it like they used to except for Barb's Country Kitchen.

When Pierre and Bernard bought the restaurant in 2018, they didn't expect the community to welcome them with open arms because of their homosexual relationship. But, when customers lovingly began asking about how their partner was doing, Pierre was astonished that Eufaula loved them anyway.

Bernard doesn't think that this kindness that the community shows them stems from agreement of their relationship status, but despite it.

Steve Watkins, Eufaula's chief of police, said he has a unique relationship with Barb's Country Kitchen. Bernard does the meals for the county jail, and he and Chief Watkins have a business relationship through the bidding process and through jail meals, according to Watkins.

"The town's reception of Bernard mirrors his service to the town. Right when the virus started, he would send meals down for the officers. He would feed the officers. He has offered us food and drinks after a major accident," Watkins said.

After a full meal of southern food better than most Alabama grandmas can cook, Main Street seems more magical than it did upon entering because visitors have seen the heart of

Eufaula bundled up into one restaurant, Barb's Country Kitchen. The sun is lower and the rays shine through the green oak trees. Like Barb's, Eufaula is home to authentic southern history and hospitality, fostering some of the last remnants of good southern tradition. But, Eufaula is a city of love, and cherishes its residents that come from all walks of life.

[Barb's Country Kitchen](#) is open for breakfast and lunch seven days a week from 7am-2pm.