



# Cary

## NORTH CAROLINA

by Emily Havener

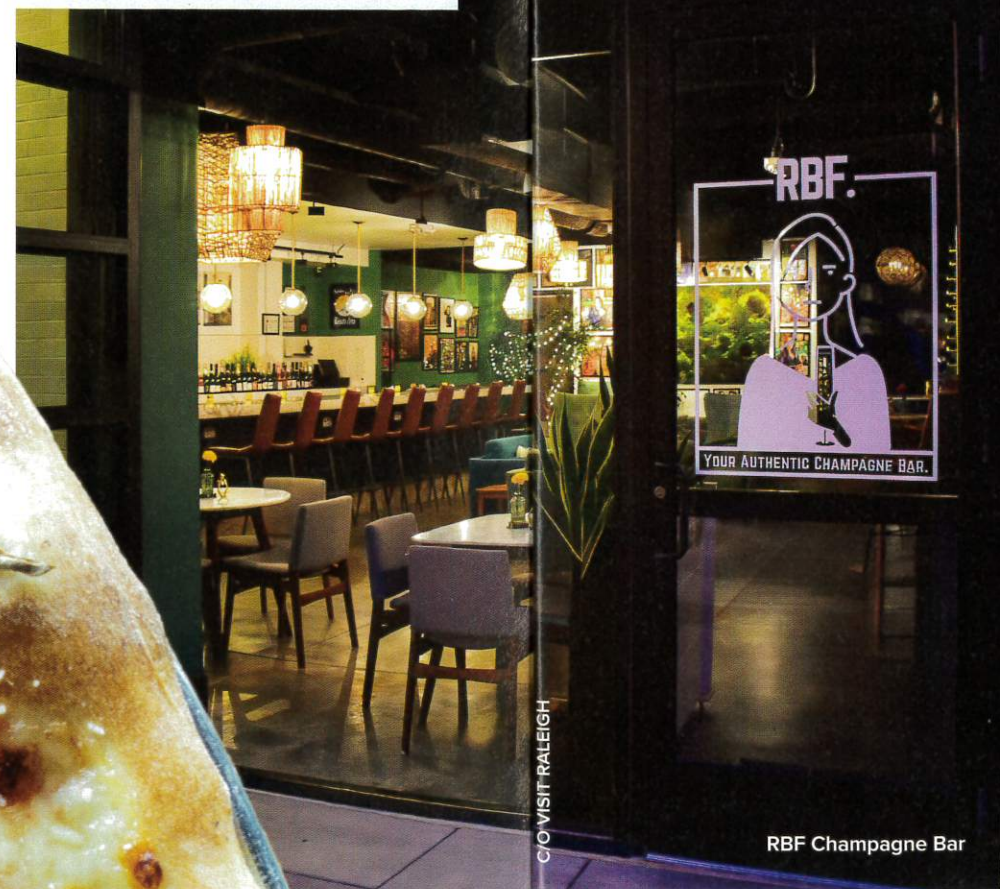
Once known as an upscale commuter's neighborhood with easy access to Raleigh, **Cary** is now its own worthwhile dining, shopping, and vacationing destination. Academy and Chatham streets run perpendicular as prime thoroughfares for drinking, dining, and nightlife, but nothing is truly off the beaten path in this easily walkable town.

In addition to recently making waves with **SAAP**, which brought Laotian flavors to the area, Cary is home to long-standing quality at businesses like Lionel Vatinet's storied **La Farm Bakery**. Weekends are lively during the dinner hours (and just a few past), with multiple breweries, a cidery, and craft cocktail bars, but everything wraps up early enough not to disrupt the close-by neighborhoods. On second Wednesdays of the month, the Downtown Cary Wine Walk involves up to eight local businesses with complimentary s'mores as a reward at the final stop, **Home for Entertaining**.

From top: Sassool;  
Di Fara Pizza Tavern



La Farm Bakery



RBF Champagne Bar

## CARY, NORTH CAROLINA

### BEST PLACES TO

## Eat & Drink

#### BEST FAMILY-RUN RESTAURANT **SAAP**

At the edge of Downtown Cary Park is SAAP, a casual fine-dining Laotian restaurant open for lunch and dinner and run by chef Lon Bounsanga and his wife and co-owner, Annmarie, who also hosts and expedites; their three daughters work as the general manager and as servers. Prominent on the menu is Laotian sausage seasoned with lemongrass, makrut lime leaves, garlic, shallots, and herbs; other standouts are the pork belly, coconut, and egg drop soup, and the NC whole fish, also available on the lettuce wrap plate. [saapcary.com](http://saapcary.com)

#### BEST BAR WITH AN ATTITUDE **RBF Champagne Bar**

Be sure to stop in RBF Champagne Bar for a champagne flight (Resilient and Ragey, Bold and B\*tchy, or Fierce and Feisty) and to take a picture of your own resting b\*tch face. It's tucked below A&BÉ Bridal Shop on Chatham Street, with the entrance from the parking lot, so don't give up looking—you'll be rewarded with specialty bubbles, still wines, and nonalcoholic options. Best of all, employees are paid based on a living wage model, so tips are optional and staff receive 100 percent of them. [rbf.wine/home](http://rbf.wine/home)

#### BEST BAKERY **La Farm Bakery**

Every local will tell you to order the white chocolate mini baguette at Lionel Vatinet's French bakery and café founded in 1999 (and now with three locations just in Cary

itself)—and they're correct, but don't stop there. In addition to dozens of breads, pastries, and baked goods, there are quiches, salads, sandwiches, and excellent coffee, along with a market filled with gifts, such as La Farm signature mixes for scones, crepes, and more. [lafarmbakery.com](http://lafarmbakery.com)

#### BEST PIZZA & BEER COMBO **Di Fara Pizza Tavern and Bond Brothers Beer Company**

In the Cary location of the original New York City pizzeria established in 1965, Di Fara Pizza Tavern makes authentic Brooklyn-style pizza, down to a special water filtration system designed to mimic the water they use to make their dough in the Big Apple. Even better, you can sit down at Bond Brothers Beer Company down the road, order a Di Fara pie for delivery, and sip on a Chatham Street Copper Lager while you wait. [difarapizzatavern.com](http://difarapizzatavern.com), [bondbrothersbeer.com](http://bondbrothersbeer.com)

#### BEST DELI **Sassool**

About a 10-minute drive south of downtown, Sassool deli offers hot and cold Levantine delights in their display case, such as fattoush salad, cilantro jalapeño hummus, and Mediterranean chicken salad, along with pizzettes, shawarma, veggie lasagna, and desserts like baklava, plus a market with a fine selection of wines. [sassool.com](http://sassool.com)

#### BEST COMFORT FOOD **Lucky 32 Southern Kitchen**

Lucky 32 Southern Kitchen offers lunch and dinner six days a week and brunch on weekends. Locals recommend both the fried catfish and the fried chicken, along with grits and mac and cheese, for a carb-heavy comfort-food feast. Its parent company, Quaintance-Weaver Restaurants and Hotels, has been 100-percent employee owned since 2017. [lucky32.com](http://lucky32.com)





## Where to Stay

### The Mayton

With a charming colonial front facing Academy Street, **The Mayton** has undergone a recent renovation; the result is a combination of historic appeal, modern amenities, and luxuries like triple-sheeted beds. The 44 rooms and suites with city or park views (you can't go wrong with either) provide walking access to all of downtown Cary, including Cotton House Craft Brewery next door and Downtown Cary Park just up the block. The hotel offers modern American dining on-site at Peck & Plume, with a variety of eating and drinking spaces ranging from the study to the terrace. You can't be better situated for experiencing all that Cary has to offer. [themayton.com](http://themayton.com)

C/O GATHER GOODS CO. OPPOSITE: ANNA BARZIN

CARY, NORTH CAROLINA

## Claim to Fame

### Downtown Cary Park

**Downtown Cary Park** opened in November 2023 to provide 7 acres of greenspace including a boardwalk over a charming water feature, playground equipment, a pavilion for concerts and events, and the dog-friendly Bark Bar with "barkyard" play areas. Perhaps most exciting, however, is the space for a variety of markets. At the Cary Night Market, held on the third Friday of the month from 5 to 9 p.m., grab a local beer on draft and shop outdoors to live music, with dozens of vendors from the Research Triangle area selling locally made goods. There are also food trucks like Sheila's Aussie Bakery, Poblanos Tacos and More, and True North Poutine's Canadian comfort food with Southern flare. On Saturday mornings the Cary Farmers Market offers access to local meats, eggs, and produce, plus specialty foods like caramels from the Cary Caramel Company and tamales from Raleigh Tamales, as well as artisans such as the award-winning Young Leem Pottery. [downtowncarypark.com](http://downtowncarypark.com)

## Where to Shop

### City Garden Design

At **City Garden Design**, owned and run by husband-and-wife team John and Paula Higdon, you'll find indoor and outdoor gardening supplies and gifts, plus services ranging from interior plantscaping and moss walls to corporate projects—and the music is noticeably on point. [citygardendesign.com](http://citygardendesign.com)

### Gather Goods Co

For homewares, gifts, jewelry and accessories, art, paper products, and more, **Gather Goods Co** offers a wide range of products and prices; best of all, most of their inventory is handmade or manufactured in small quantities by microartists and emerging business owners. Check out their "Made in NC" section, which includes Ogre Sauce, Spicewalla seasonings, handmade porcelain, soap, greeting cards, and art prints. [shop.gathergoodsco.com](http://shop.gathergoodsco.com)

### The Cary Vintage Market

**The Cary Vintage Market** occurs monthly with clothing, jewelry, and accessories on offer—but also records, cassettes, and housewares, along with food trucks, specialty baked goods, and beverage options for shoppers. Claire Nobles says she founded the market based on her penchant for classic vintage style that spans several decades. The result is that the market appeals to customers of all ages who are drawn to its multiple facets. [@caryvintagemarket](https://www.instagram.com/caryvintagemarket)



Gather Goods Co