

# FOOD & DINING



ZACH MCCORMACK

Damage shown to downtown Chimney Rock after Hurricane Helene.

## How to help Western NC businesses after Helene

BY MELISSA OYLER  
moyley@charlotteobserver.com

When it comes to birthday, holiday or “just because” gifts (one of my best friends calls them “happy presents”), we often want to support local shops, restaurants and other businesses.

And after Hurricane Helene hit and devastated so many of our mountain towns who rely on tourism, especially right near the peak of leaf-changing season, supporting these businesses feels more critical than ever.

Officials have asked us not to travel to Western North Carolina for fun right now, and many of these shops were absolutely devastated, so there would be no place for us to visit even if we could get there.

So, how can we help support from afar?

- Local shops and restaurants that were affected by Hurricane Helene in North Carolina and are beginning to



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Damage shown at RiverWatch Grill after Hurricane Helene.

offer ways to support them online, including making purchases and supporting fundraising efforts. One business suggested including a note stating “**Ship when the time is right**” with your purchases, and that’s probably a great idea for all of these places.

- In addition to ordering material items from retailers, another idea is to book a rental or a session with a place that you don’t plan on using, so the business is able to pocket the money. This may help hospitality folks who can’t work during this time.

If your favorite mountain spot isn’t on this list and you think our readers would like to know about it, please send us an email to [charlottefive@charlottefive.com](mailto:charlottefive@charlottefive.com) and we’ll get it added. And keep checking in with your favorite spots — many of them are still trying to get their bearings after so much devastation. And so many of them need our help.

Here are a few to get you started — and if this isn’t enough, refer to this list of Western North Carolina businesses started by an Asheville local and added to by the businesses themselves:

### ASHE COUNTY CHEESE

Location: 106 E Main St., West Jefferson, NC 28694  
Ashe County Cheese is back open after Hurricane Helene: “We are okay, but our community has been devastated,” the West Jefferson cheese shop posted on Facebook. Ashe

SEE BUSINESSES, 4C

## New restaurant The Imperial Treasure brings dim sum, Beijing roast duck to Charlotte area

BY MARI PRESSLEY  
charlottefive@charlottefive.com

After years of running kitchens in both China and California, Li Li and her husband decided to step away from the fast-paced, traffic-heavy lifestyle in California in search of a fresh start in Charlotte.

In Charlotte, they found a city with a growing Asian community but felt something was missing — authentic Chinese food.

With intentions of sharing a taste of home, the restaurateurs are introducing their passion for handmade dim sum, Beijing roast duck and stir fry. At The Imperial Treasure, which opened Oct. 8 in Matthews, you can expect to savor traditional Chinese cuisine and wok-fired flavors in every dish.

“The collaborative culture within the kitchen has allowed for a continuous exchange of



TONYA RUSS PRICE CharlotteFive

Spicy wontons at The Imperial Treasure.

ideas and creativity,” Li said. “Everyone is dedicated to refining and innovating while maintaining the traditional flavors that our cuisine is known for.”

Aiming for an upscale dining experience, The Imperial Treasure is designed to be a place where guests celebrate special occasions or enjoy a night out. “Being part of the creation of

The Imperial Treasure has been a deeply rewarding and collaborative journey. From the start, we’ve set out to create an authentic dining experience that captures the essence of Chinese cuisine, especially with our focus on dim sum and other traditional dishes,” Li told CharlotteFive [EAT MORE CHINESE

FOOD: Van Loi reopens, serving roasted pork, barbecue and Chinese meats for takeout in Charlotte.]

The Imperial Treasure’s team is committed to using only fresh, high-quality ingredients, serving dishes with generous portions.

“One of the most fulfilling aspects has been the level of care and attention that goes into every detail — whether it’s sourcing fresh, high-quality ingredients or perfecting recipes that have been passed down through generations,” Li said.

### THE IMPERIAL TREASURE’S ATMOSPHERE

From the moment you step into The Imperial Treasure, you are immersed in a restaurant designed to reflect a “new Chinese style.”

A water fountain greets visitors, alongside a dumpling-making station that allows diners to watch their meals being made by hand. And its dining room includes plenty of four-top tables, along with a private party room that seats 10.

### MENU HIGHLIGHTS

Some of The Imperial Treas-

SEE RESTAURANT, 3C

## Free meals after hurricane are a lifeline, but not everyone can eat them

BY SARA MURPHY  
charlottefive@charlottefive.com

When Patricia Sprinkle and her family lost power in the Buncombe County neighborhood of Enka-Candler due to Hurricane Helene, she faced an extra challenge when it came to getting food.

As someone with celiac disease, an autoimmune disorder in which eating gluten damages the lining of the small intestine, Sprinkle’s diet centers on meats, fruits and gluten-free products. (She’s not a fan of vegetables.) But all of the meat and gluten-free goods were gone from her local store’s shelves.

“We finally found some bacon at the farmers market. So I’ve kind of been living off of bacon,” she said. And even though her power returned a few days later, there’s still no water, making cooking and baking a challenge.

“I honestly feel like I’ve lost about 10 pounds in the last 10 days,” Sprinkle said. A friend in Virginia also just sent her two boxes of gluten-free food from Wegmans. But she is still on the lookout for a nice hot meal that she can trust won’t make her sick.

According to the latest Duke Energy outage map on Tuesday, Oct. 8, over 100,000 people still lack power in the Carolinas following Hurricane Helene. As of last Thursday, 136,000 people in the Southeast didn’t have access to clean water, with 1.8

SEE FREE MEALS, 4C

## ‘Shark Tank’ is featuring new concept by Fig Tree owners

BY HEIDI FINLEY  
hfinley@charlotteobserver.com

A new restaurant concept brought to Charlotte by the owners of The Fig Tree Restaurant will soon get national attention with an appearance on an upcoming episode of ABC’s “Shark Tank.”

Fine dining veterans Greg and Sara Zanitsch — known for putting out elegant dishes such as escargot and lamb carpaccio — discovered Topsail Steamer on a trip to Florida last year. The couple loved the steamed seafood combinations so much that they decided to open a location in Charlotte.

Topsail Steamer restaurants offers Bay Buckets such as The Low Country Shrimp, The Topsail Clam Bake and The Crabby Jimbo, each packed with fresh seafood, corn, potatoes and butter, with Topsail Steamer’s signature seasoning. There’s also an option for you to create your own combination.

Locally baked cornbread and pies made in house at The Fig Tree are available to pair with your meal — and you can even save a few dollars on both by ordering a bundle.

The Topsail Steamer concept may be familiar to those who vacation on the North Carolina coast. Topsail Steamer locations are also on Topsail Island and Wrightsville Beach. The small chain now has 10 locations altogether in New Jersey, North Carolina, Delaware, Florida and Alabama. The new season of “Shark

SEE SHARK TANK, 3C