

SOUL FOOD IN THE BAY CITY

By Beau Bridgen

Why would you look for southern soul food in San Francisco? If there was one place in the world where you wouldn't think to find the buttery biscuits and artery-clogging fried goodness of this type of soul food, it would be SF. As someone who has been to the Deep South and lives in SF, I can say with the utmost confidence that there are few places that are more different. They might as well be different planets. However, I love Soul Food, the biscuits and gravy, the fried catfish and chicken, the gumbo, and red beans and rice. All foods are rich in flavor and taste, but they also require dedication to make them. Foods that, for all intents and purposes, shouldn't be on this side of the country. But at Brenda's Meat and Three, you can have them all, less than a ten-minute drive from UHS.

When you enter Brenda's, you enter a unique world that combines the worn seats and long horseshoe-shaped bar of a Saloon with the chic exposed brick and white-washed walls. A blending of styles you might not expect to work, but it does. It could be the twangy blues music, longing and mournful playing from shiny new JBL speakers. Maybe it's the people there. The customers of all ages, as young as my 17-year-old friends and as old as the man sitting in the corner with a tweed jacket on. All races and religions, too, so many people, all so different, but all sitting in the dining room. A short white man sits across from a tall black man, a young girl sits with her mother, two nurses in blue pants and Patagonia fleeces sit at the bar talking about their shift, and finally, one tall kid with blonde hair peeking out from under a blue and white hat sits at a table studying the menu intently.

And if you go to Brenda's and you scour the menu just as intently as that kid did, you realize that there's only one thing on the menu worth the hour or so of digestion. The Biscuits and Gravy. It comes with your choice of eggs (they should be sunnyside up), and biscuits. Two biscuits are so big they have their own gravitational pull smothered in a sea of savory sausage gravy. The eggs radiate inwards from crinkled sides to soft, fluffy clouds to the runny and salty yolk. The biscuits steaming and the perfect amount of salty and sweet, absolutely drenched in the smoky sludge that is the sausage gravy. It's a special thing to enjoy a really good dish of Biscuits and Gravy, even more so in SF. But that's what makes Brenda's so special, you get the best of both worlds.