

Raving About Redbone

This South Carolina native gives diners in Florence and Sumter something to howl about.

Dale Barth's daughter brought a restaurant home one day—so he decided to keep it. Actually, when Allie showed up with a redbone hound, he found a family pet and a name for his Florence restaurant.

"Clementine was laid-back but mischievous—kind of like all Southerners," Dale says. "So I thought 'Redbone Alley' would make a great name for a Southern restaurant."

Doing the Charleston

A Florence native, Dale got his first taste of the restaurant business while

going to school in Charleston. "I paid my way through college working at restaurants," he says. "I loved it."

Home after graduation, Dale ran into a friend experiencing problems with her small restaurant, P.A.'s. "I talked her into selling it to me. Unfortunately, I didn't know how to cook." So the novice restaurateur "got about 100 cookbooks and taught myself."

His crash course in the culinary arts paid off. By 1990, P.A.'s was one of the area's most successful restaurants, and Dale started thinking about expanding. "My wife, Leslie, and I



wanted to open a family-friendly restaurant with good food and a nice, quiet atmosphere," he says. "Something like the courtyard cafes I'd known in college."

They got the chance when a JCPenney moved out of the local mall. Dale visited the empty 20,000-

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above: Although he's one of South Carolina's most successful restaurateurs, Redbone Alley founder Dale Barth still spends time in the kitchen. **left:** The courtyard cafes of Charleston inspired Redbone Alley's outdoor/indoor decor.

square-foot store, looked up at the high ceilings, and knew he'd found his piece of Charleston in Florence.

Investing more than \$1 million in the project, he tore off part of the roof and installed a facade resembling a Charleston street lined with row houses. Brick pathways meander from table to table, while lanterns re-create the glow of a Lowcountry evening.

Redbone and Beyond

These days more than 1,500 people may drop by the Florence restaurant in a single evening, with another couple hundred or so sitting down to dinner at a smaller Redbone in Sumter.

Now Dale has branched out. He prepares wild game on The Outdoor Channel's *Outdoor Moments* program as well as on *South Carolina Outdoors* on local cable. The self-taught chef also introduced a line of Redbone aiolis, spices, and rubs, and he's authored two books of recipes.

He hopes one day to return to his roots. "My next project is opening a small fine dining place," he says. "All I need is to find the time."

And hope that Allie shows up with another name-inspiring hound.

JAMES T. BLACK

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