

# Grains

**1.** Fresh, made-from-scratch pasta is lightyears away from the dried and boxed stuff. But unless you have a lot of patience, extra kitchen smarts and a pasta-roller, it's not the easiest thing to make at home. That's where **Mezza** comes in. The cozy restaurant makes its noodles from scratch before combining them with robust sauces, like the chef's ragù (\$23), a stick-to-your ribs, meat-based sauce. At Mezza, house-made pappardelle (wide, flat noodles) provide the perfect base for the comforting dish.

**2.** Think of focaccia as the love-child of pizza and bread—the flat, oven-baked loaf often comes topped with herbs and other ingredients. **The French Pantry's** focaccia (\$6) is studded with sun-dried tomatoes, chunks of goat cheese and a hefty dose of rosemary. It turns a traditional sandwich into something deliciously different but it's equally tasty when served on its own. Just try not to devour the entire loaf in one sitting.

**3.** Lentils are one of the world's oldest crops and a healthy source of protein, fiber

and folate. They're also relatively easy to prepare and readily absorb flavors from oils and seasonings. **Native Sun Natural Food Market's** lentil salad (\$7 per pound) combines the legumes with liquid aminos, collards, red bell pepper and almonds.

**4.** Fewer smells are as enticing as that of fresh-baked bread. **Village Bread** has been hand-forming and baking traditional loaves since 1992, including its whole wheat variety (\$2.25) which is available sliced or un-sliced. "Most of the bread we bake today is delivered tomorrow," says Nick Chaput, sales manager. "We only use fresh yeast to rise our products, which gives the bread a distinct taste. Many of our artisan products require benchwork, where you're forming loaves almost entirely by hand."

**5.** Middlins, a by-product of milling rice, are the South's answer to risotto. The broken pieces of rice take on an almost creamy consistency when cooked and pair well with hearty sauces. They're one of the most in-demand

products from **Congaree and Penn Farm & Mills**, a rice farm and mayhaw orchard located on the Northside. "The difference between our product and what you find in a store is that we're milling it fresh—we harvest it, dry it, and store it in small batches every week," says Congaree owner Scott Meyer. "Out at the farm, we've got a really thick layer of clay below our sandy, loamy soil, and it retains the water really well. We have the right climate and the right soil to grow rice. It's close to what they do in Japan." The middlins (\$10 per 12 ounce-bag) can be purchased by home cooks and also feature prominently on the menus of restaurants including 29 South and Orsay.

**6.** Soft and warm, doughy and slightly salty—few can criticize the breadstick, an ideal appetizer before taking on even more carbs in the form of pasta or pizza. **Trasca & Co.'s** panino sticks (\$5) are a basket of freshly baked, seasoned mini breadsticks, made with the eatery's secret panino dough recipe. "My grandmother invented the dough in 1974,"

says Trasca owner Sara Trembath. "It has been passed down from my grandparents, to my parents and my aunts and uncles and now to my cousins and me. For the panino sticks we use the dough to make mini breadsticks, then top them with seasoning salt, bake them and serve them with housemade marinara and housemade ranch dressing. They are pretty exquisite."

**7.** Gnocchi—small dumplings made from wheat flour, egg and potato—are an Italian specialty. Though often served as a side dish, the pillowy concoctions are flavorful enough to shine on their own, as they do in **Moxie Kitchen + Cocktails'** iteration (\$21.50) with heirloom tomatoes, smoked mozzarella and tomato and basil purée. "Our gnocchi is handmade with potatoes, flour and local farm eggs from Cognito Farms," says chef Tom Gray. "As a versatile backdrop for many flavors, we can prepare seasonal versions. Later, when the seasons change, we'll incorporate more hearty flavors with ingredients like braised oxtail and creamed leeks. It's a perennial favorite."



1



2



3



4



5



6



7