

GO GUIDE

Where to
get your
hand pies

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DINING OUT BY ELIZABETH LENHARD

Tour 5 top hand pie sites

These convenient little pastries are crusty relics of Atlanta's pioneering past.

Some people might liken the hand pie trend to the cupcake craze. Cutesy up your pastry by zapping it with a shrink ray and it'll sell like, well, hotcakes.

But hand pies are so much more than cute. They're as saturated with history as they are with butter or lard. They're crusty relics – in the most literal and delicious sense – of our hardworking, pioneering past.

When you think about it, the tidy little double-crust hand pie is the original to-go box. British miners took them into the deep. Practical Southern church ladies have long stocked them at bake sales. And can't you just picture Laura and Mary Ingalls slipping a couple of edible hand-warmers into their pockets for their walk to the schoolhouse?

Unlike cupcakes, which are almost always muffin-shaped and voluminously frosted, hand pie bakers have their way with any and all geometry. Hand pies might be moon-shaped – full or crescent. Some are flat and boxy enough to give you Pop-Tart flashbacks. They can be triangular turnovers or the shape and size of bricks.

And, yes, sometimes they are just miniature pies – round, crimp-edged and nested in teensy tin plates. They are baked, they are fried and in the case of, say, empanadas or samosas, they have alluring accents.



Hand pies made and sold in the metro area come in a variety of shapes and ingredients such as these from Australian Bakery Cafe on the square in Marietta. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS BY BECKSTEIN.COM

This tour focuses on the hand pies of winter – pastry-crust and warming to both the stomach and the heart. Some of these pies are hearty enough to be dinner. Others serve as that nip of sweetness you need with your afternoon tea.

Each and every one is a cozy, buttery and addictive handful.

Australian Bakery Cafe

To walk into this cutely cluttered bakery on Marietta Square is to yearn to be Australian. The imported chocolate bars, the freezer full of bangers, the Lamingtons and Hedgehog slices – they'll all make a true Aussie weep with nostalgia.

But nothing is as down under as the cafe's vast assortment of square, savory pies. Call 'em the kangaroos of Aus-



Callie's Buttermilk Biscuit dough is rolled thinly and folded around hand-made Regular Pimento Cheese and roasted Cherry Tomatoes.

tralian Bakery – the place is overrun by them.

The "original" steak pie is doctored with mushrooms,

onions, cheese, bacon or some combo of the above. There are also oblong sausage rolls with a puff-pastry-like crust



This Aussie Meat Pie made of ground chuck and ground beef in a seasoned gravy is available at Australian Bakery Cafe.

and massive pastries that only count as hand pies if you have the hands of a giant.

Even dessert features a tiny tart, filled with sticky, chewy minced fruit – and perhaps the salty tears of those homesick for the other side of the world.

48 S. Park Square, Marietta. 678-797-6222, australianbakerycafe.com

Callie's Hot Little Biscuit

Callie's is a tight little operation. On the bill of fare are biscuits and jam, biscuits and ham, biscuits and ... you get the idea.

This is not to say the adorable, farmhouse-chic Callie's is monotonous. Oh, no. They'll pinch biscuit dough into a bowl and fill it with shrimp and grits in a nod to the bakery's Charleston roots.

They'll infuse biscuits with cinnamon, with sugar, with cheese and chives.

But best of all is the biscuity magic that happens only on Tuesdays. That is Hot Little Biscuit Pocket day.

These hand pies are rectangular, rustic and born of economy.

"We use leftover buttermilk biscuit dough," explained Callie's regional manager, Bea Shaffer. "By that, I mean it's the third roll-out. Dough we don't want to overwork for the biscuits."

Its works just fine for these hand pies, which are stuffed

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with pimento cheese and either roasted tomato or Virginia ham. They are flaky, flat, savory as all get out, and way more portable than Callie's two-fists-required biscuit samies.

1004 N. Highland Ave. N.E., Atlanta. 404-330-8285, calliesbiscuits.com

Proof Bakeshop

If you ask Proof co-pastry chef Abigail Quinn, the humble hand pie is practically perfect in every way.

"It's got a better proportion of crust to fruit," she said. "A big pie is fruitier. And when we sell it by the slice, people just aren't as interested."

Proof regulars know the bread is good and the cakes are pretty, but the pastries that inspire lasting obsession are the ones that flake all over your lap and shatter between the teeth.

Quinn's hand-pie crust fits very well into this category. It's dappled with crunchy sugar, but is not overly sweet. It's stuffed with subtly sugared apples (these wintry days) or oozing with peaches, blueberries or cherries (get those in the heat of summer).

The delicate little pies are sold Thursdays through Saturdays at Proof and its big sister, Cakes and Ale. Such elusiveness only adds to their charms.

100 Hurt St. N.E., Atlanta. 678-705-3905, proofbakeshop.com

Panbury's

There's a charming contradiction between Panbury's



Hand pies from Panbury's are heartily stuffed with savory greatness. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS BY BECKYSTEIN.COM



Aussie Meat Pie features beef in a seasoned gravy and a flaky pastry top.

warm-yet-industrial stand in the Sweet Auburn Curb Market and its wares. The decor is

bright turquoises and yellows, super-cool fonts and on-trend wood planks.

The food? Puff-crust, deep-tinned, couldn't-be-more-country pies heartily stuffed with steak-and-stout, creamy chicken and mushrooms, and spinach and feta, to name a few.

Of course, by "country" we don't mean American farmland but South Africa, homeland of owners Lauren Duxbury and Adam Panayiotou. (Get it? He's "Pan" and she's "bury.")

South Africa, Panayiotou said, is a place where hand pies are sold on every corner and at every gas station. Panbury's is working on such ubiquity in Atlanta and, thus, its owners recently opened a second location at Peachtree Center.

Both stands sell mini fruit

pies and pig-in-a-blanket-style "bites." But Panbury's delicious stars are those meaty, medieval-looking, block-shaped pies.

209 Edgewood Ave. S.E., Atlanta, and 231 Peachtree St. N.E., Atlanta. 404-500-1279, panburys.com

Biltong Bar

Ostensibly, the beautifully burnished pies at Biltong Bar are South African style. But their true inspiration is much more precise.

"These pies were specifically designed with Ponce City Market in mind. You can walk around and eat them with the filling not falling out and the gravy not tipping out," said owner Justin Anthony, whom Atlantans also know from 10 Degrees South, where his mother, Diane, is executive chef.

Thank an ingenious crust (devised by Biltong Bar but made by Holeman & Finch) for the pies' portability. Buttery and light, the crust is also, somehow, sturdy. The gently rounded pies remain crisp around their moist, savory innards, which include bobotie (sweet curried ground beef) and a gravy-licious chicken stew. Meanwhile, the 1-inch-wide crimped edge never crumbles when bitten.

Dip these pies in the accompanying fruit chutneys or zingy peri-peri sauce. Or go for an even better pairing — one of Biltong's boozy, bold cocktails.

The resulting joy will make you wonder why more bars don't traffic in delectable little meat pies such as these.

675 Ponce de Leon Ave. N.E., Atlanta. 404-900-7900, facebook.com/BiltongBarATL