

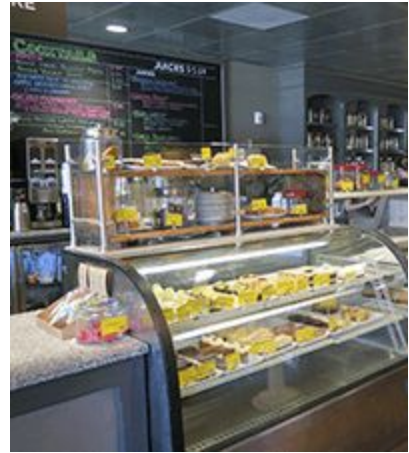
**Earl's Grocery 2017**  
**words: Mandi English**  
**photos: Ellen Gurley**



Nestled into the busy street of Elizabeth sits the adorable market, Earl's Grocery. Sisters Bonnie Warford and Tricia Maddrey opened Earl's Grocery just a few short years ago. It is just a block from their fine dining, art nouveau restaurant, Carpe Diem. Carpe Diem has a long story treading through the history of Charlotte. It started at an adorable location on Tryon Street in the Ratcliff's florist store. Right beside that first location, they owned one of Charlotte's well known small music venues, the Moon Room. It wasn't long before the powers that be in Charlotte decided to make big changes and build condos on this spot. Many people, the sisters included, fought to save the historic building. While the Ratcliff's Flowers facade stayed, the restaurant had to move to another historic building in Charlotte, the old Caroline Pharmacy (which is where our arena is now).

These ladies were determined to hold onto their dream. Carpe Diem is one of those small restaurants that has a simple yet complex menu of exquisite appetizers, salads, and main courses. The people who have worked for Bonnie and Tricia, myself included, have all gone on to do amazing things. The sisters "raised" a generation of hard working people. The move to their current location is their last stop. The space is exquisite; the mahogany wood, marble floors and attention to detail following an art nouveau design theme. The food is perfection with a palate cleanser served between courses and an extensive wine list. In my opinion one of the finest places to have a meal in Charlotte.

Not long after setting up a shop in this new location, the installation of the trolley line began. With that came the failing of several businesses on that street, but Carpe stood strong and stayed. With the completion of the construction, the Nofo business space became available. Bonnie and Tricia had always wanted to open a lunch spot that would allow them to interact with their guests more. Since their father was so instrumental in helping them open up Carpe Diem, they wanted to honor his name and give him the credit he deserved by opening Earl's Grocery.



In true Bonnie Warford and Tricia Maddrey fashion, they did it up right. This high end market is the perfect spot. They have a great lunch counter that serves a diverse mix for lunch and dinner. They serve amazing bahn mi that rivals some other beloved local sandwich shops. They have street-style tacos and even some delicious vegetarian options. They did not stop there. There is a full deli serving freshly made dinner options to take home for one or to feed a small get-together. As if that is not enough, they have a full staff in the bakery/dessert area with a barista for fresh coffees, teas and juices. One of the best things is that it is set up like an old school New York deli/soda shop, where you can grab all of your goodies from the various counters and beverages from the coolers and sit with your friends and family beside the garage style doors on a beautiful day. Have a glass of wine, beer, or one of the many other immense choices they offer to quench your thirst.



The thing is, Earl's isn't just your local grab-and-go lunch spot. Every bottle of wine and fine food item have been handpicked and have even won awards. They go out of their way to avoid certain ingredients such as high fructose corn syrup. In their many travels to farmers markets in New York, DC and Boston, they did the research and found the quality items that they feels they can be proud to serve their customers. Bonnie and Tricia also cater everything from small breakfasts to large events. (Years ago, I was on staff at a wedding that Carpe Diem catered and I met Bruce Springsteen and his children. You never know who might be at one of their gigs.)



The sisters say that soon they would love to bring a little Moon Room vibe back to the place with more events, poetry readings, DJ's, storytelling, musicians and the like. This is one stop on the 'places you should check out in Charlotte' list. When you do get there, you will be pleased to meet the pleasant staff and I am sure you will see Bonnie or Tricia. They are almost always there with their fingers on the pulse. Don't be afraid to say hi. They are always more than glad to greet a guest, answer your questions, or direct you to a helpful employee. They make sure the staff know just as much as they do about everything in their grocery. Check them out today.

**Earl's Grocery | 1609 Elizabeth Ave. | 704-333-2757**  
[Facebook.com/EarlsOnElizabeth](https://www.facebook.com/EarlsOnElizabeth)