

Americans always make room for dessert

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The front line in America's battle to preserve its sanity, creative spirit and good cheer runs through places like Allen & Son Bar-B-Que in Chapel Hill, N.C., where regular customers know the menu will carry five or six pies, a half-dozen puddings and fruit cobblers, ice cream, cookies, and always, always the cream cheese pound cake with cream cheese icing.

It extends past Tartine Bakery & Café in San Francisco, where the morning pastry makers double up the Valrhona filling in the pain au chocolate.

And it curlicues in front of Charlie Trotter's in Chicago, where pastry chef Della Gossett wrestles purple Okinawan sweet potatoes away from the savory cooks so that she can spontaneously create a homage to Asian regional cuisine for the dessert menu.

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