

# Meet the Peaches' country fried steak sandwich, a.k.a. your new food crush



By **Jenn Harris**

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**T**his city is currently experiencing an obsession with fried chicken. If we're being specific, it's actually an intense love affair with fried chicken sandwiches — larger-than-life, can't-quite-fit-my-mouth-around towers of crispy fried chicken thighs, pickle chips and mayonnaise on golden, fluffy buns. And yes, they make for quite the Instagram posts.

On Ryan and Diana Lamon's Peaches' Smokehouse & Southern Kitchen food truck, which hit the streets of Los Angeles in 2013, the beloved fried chicken sandwich has some competition.

It's one of the most popular items on both the truck and the couple's downtown restaurant, Poppy + Rose. Ryan, who is the chef, and Diana, who runs the front of the house, added a second truck in April; they opened their small downtown restaurant in 2014.

And theirs is one of the better fried chicken sandwiches in town — peppery buttermilk fried chicken layered with tangy house-made pickle chips and garlic aioli on one of those golden, fluffy buns.

But your new food crush of the moment is the country fried steak sandwich. Ryan pounds Angus steak into quarter-inch-thin pieces, soaks them in buttermilk, then dredges them in flour and a blend of spices. The

steak is fried to order and served with shredded lettuce, slivers of red onion and a jammy mixture of garlic aioli and peach preserves.

When the sandwich is presented, pieces of the fried steak hang over the sides of the bun, and it's just a little too tempting not to rip off a couple of the crisp edges before you take your first real bite. The crust is so crunchy it shatters, with little flecks of black pepper throughout; the meat is tender, and the peach preserves give the effect of sweet applesauce on a fried pork chop.

The sandwich is a take on classic country fried steak, a dish Ryan grew up eating in Hoschton, Ga., where his father, Frank, owned a restaurant called Frank's Real Pit BBQ.

"We moved around a lot growing up, but there was always consistency in our food, like country fried steak night or pulled pork from my dad's smoker or pimento cheese in the fridge," said Ryan, who started helping his father smoke meat when he was 7. Ryan went on to cook at Fatty Crab in New York City and become the sous chef at the Copper Onion in Salt Lake City.

He says he never planned on opening a food truck, but in 2013, he and his wife saw an online ad to compete in the TV show "Food Truck Face Off." They did — and won a food truck.

"We'd never even stepped foot on a food truck before competing on the show, so it's been quite the wild ride for us," said Ryan. "I have a lot of professional interest in food that's unconventional or unexpected. But there's something to be said about honoring American classics, about preparing food that's familiar and nostalgic."

So Ryan's menu is a mix of smoked meat, fried chicken and patty melts, but everything features a little twist. He may have been trained in Carolina-style barbecue, but a trip to Texas inspired the chef to make beef brisket. He brines whole cuts of the meat, covers it in a house-made rub then smokes the meat on low for 12 to 16 hours.

As for the pulled pork, Lamon brines whole pork shoulders, then smokes them on low heat with white oak for 10 to 12 hours. Heaps of the pulled pork tossed with barbecue sauce and slices of the brisket are used to make some of the other sandwiches on the truck. Then there's the Southern patty melt, made with a creamy house-made pimento cheese.

As you make your way down the menu, you may be alarmed to find something called Redneck Nachos. It's actually a plate of waffle fries topped with pulled pork, barbecue sauce and sour cream.

"When we first started, we didn't know what we were doing, so we were parking in the most random places at all hours of the day and night and drunk people would come up to us all the time asking for Mexican food," said Ryan. "Diana got the idea to serve our pulled pork over our waffle fries and call it nachos. And I said to her, 'That's like redneck nachos.' And then the name just stuck."

And the name Peaches?

"When I was a sous chef at the Copper Onion in Salt Lake City, I used to call my cooks Peaches just to be a jerk," said Ryan. "And then finally, one day, one of the guys turned to me and said, 'Wait a second — you're

from Georgia. You're Peaches.' I was Peaches for years.”

You can find the Peaches truck schedule online at [www.peachestruck.com](http://www.peachestruck.com).

**My idea of a romantic date involves tacos on a street corner. Follow me on Twitter and Instagram @Jenn\_Harris\_**

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