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Papa's Soul Food Kitchen is closing this year, leaving behind a 15-year legacy of culture, music, and finger-lickin' barbecue. Since Ted "Papa" Lee died in 2012, the restaurant stayed open under the leadership of his widow, Debra Lee. "It was awesome to have it, especially after he passed away, to have that support system. It felt like he was still here," Lee says. "It helped me to heal from his passing." She adds, "I miss doing it with him." Lee says she's not sure what she'll do after closing the restaurant, but says she's looking forward to taking a breather and turning off her electronics for a while.

A juggernaut of Best of Eugene, Papa's has won Best Barbeque repeatedly over the years, and this year tops the list for both Best Barbeque and Best Comfort Food. And why not? With its cute, homey menu and atmosphere and delectable Southern delights, Papa's has been a staple of the Whiteaker for over a decade. It has some of the best cornbread in town, incredible hush puppies, and

beef brisket that melts in your mouth — not to mention gumbo and Nawlins style jambalaya. It's always a battle to pick the best sides on that robust menu. Lee says she's grateful for the support she's had from the community since Papa's passing. "It's been eight years since he passed away, and just having his memory still here and being able to share his dream with the community is really important to me." On getting picked for Best of Eugene, she says, "It feels really good to go out with a bang." Lee hopes the community will keep Papa's memory alive "in their own way" now that the restaurant is closing — though she's not sure when. She recommends filling your need for great BBQ at Tony's, a food cart on River Road in Santa Clara.

Eugene is losing an institution, but we're excited to see what fills that gap on the coveted corner of 4th and Blair. Best wishes to Lee and the entire staff as they take their next steps in life after Papa and Papa's Soul Food. — *Kelly Kenoyer*

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