

ERNEST ALEXANDER



2025 HALL OF FAME LEGACY INDUCTEE

ERNEST “ALECK” ALEXANDER

Ernest “Aleck” Alexander was a beloved Atlanta pitmaster and cultural icon whose restaurant, Aleck’s Barbecue Heaven, operated for nearly half a century and stood as both a culinary landmark and a quiet cornerstone of the civil rights era.

Opening in 1942, Aleck hand-built his original barbecue pit from cobblestones reclaimed from the street outside—Hunter Street, later renamed Martin Luther King Jr. Drive. A master brickmason and businessman, he expanded to six barbecue joints across Atlanta, designing and constructing each pit himself. Aleck’s flagship location was famously frequented by his friend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who often stopped by for ribs before major speeches—despite Coretta Scott King’s wishes for a stricter diet. After King’s assassination, Aleck honored his friend with a portrait and a special booth reserved by invitation only.

Even after a stroke in 1979, Aleck continued working at the restaurant until his passing in 1986. Today, his daughter Pamela Alexander preserves his legacy through Aleck’s “Comeback” sauce and storytelling. Celebrated by The New York Times, The Washington Post, and featured in the Atlanta History Center’s “Barbecue Nation” exhibit, Aleck’s influence endures as a symbol of culinary craftsmanship, Black entrepreneurship, and cultural history in the American South.