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Check out Texas' top new restaurants

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Jan. 13, 2011, 5:40PM



Melissa Phillip Chronicle

Hamcock crackings at Bootsie's Heritage Cafe

A traveler's checklist includes comfortable transportation, luxurious hotel accommodations and activities that will rejuvenate, inspire or broaden your cultural understanding.

But let's not overlook breakfast, lunch and dinner. If you're traveling in-state, for business or for pleasure, make a point of trying some of the best new restaurants that **Texas** has to offer.

Restaurant critics from the state's five largest cities — Austin, Dallas, **Fort Worth**, Houston and San Antonio - have assembled their top picks from eateries that opened their doors in 2010.

UCHIKO

An extension of chef **Tyson Cole's** popular Uchi restaurant, Uchiko draws from the same fusion of sushi and **Japanese cooking** techniques for fish, **Wagyu beef**, pork belly, even rabbit. Executive chef Paul Qui also brings inspiration from his native Philippines, as well as Vietnam and Thailand, most explosively in *karaage*, a fried chicken dish with a crackling thin shell around tender meat. The sushi bar follows Qui's pursuit of that one perfect bite through Norwegian mackerel garnished with basil, heirloom tomato and truffle and the Toledo sushi roll with fried almonds, chorizo, tuna and a torrent of grilled garlic.

Address: 4200 N. Lamar Blvd., No. 140, Austin

Price range: \$4.50-\$16

Hours: 5-10 p.m. Sunday-Thursday; 5-11 p.m. Friday-Saturday

Info: www.uchikoaustin.com; 512-916-4808

FOREIGN & DOMESTIC

The husband-and-wife team of Ned and Jodi Elliott have almost 20 years' experience between them working for Michelin-starred places such as Per Se, Gramercy Tavern and Bouley in New York. But they see Foreign & Domestic as a casual place that might have venison-heart tartare with fried pig's ear on one night, or octopus and scallops with squid ink and chorizo on another, or something as simple as slices of prized Tennessee ham. The kitchen is built right into the dining room, so if you liked the pork belly with candied olives, just tap the cook on the shoulder and tell him.

Address: 306 E. 53rd St., Austin

Price range: \$14-24

Hours: 5 to 9:30 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday, 5 to 10:30 p.m. Friday-

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50 people recommend this.

Saturday.

Info: www.foodanddrinkaustin.com; 512-459-1010**LUCIA**

From the moment chef David Uygur announced that his highly anticipated Oak Cliff restaurant was open for business, Lucia was, hands-down, the hardest reservation to snag in town. With expectations running high, disappointment could come easily.

But with the first bite of crusty house-baked bread, the first taste of olives bathed in warm oil and herbs, I was thoroughly charmed. A sip of lively red Moric Blaufrankish from Austria, a bite of earthy chicken liver crostini with pickled cippolini and the evening unfolds deliciously.

Don't look for fettuccine Alfredo on the menu; you won't find it. What the chef is doing in the 36-seat spot is very personal. Oyster risotto, bright with parsley; house-made whole wheat spaghetti topped with rich, saucy braised duck. All the details feel right, down to the garlicky fried bread crumbs with a smidge of anchovy and lemon zest on top of cauliflower roasted to exactly the right point of melty caramelization.

Address: 408 W. Eighth St., Dallas**Price range:** \$20 to \$24**Hours:** 5:30-10 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday**Info:** www.luciadallas.com ; 214-948-4998**NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES BAR AND GRILL**

There's a reason there's always a wait at Nick Badovinus' newest restaurant: The place is rollicking good. Excellent service, upbeat vibe, decent acoustics, comfy booths - what more do you want? The cocktails are great. The patio's relaxed. The menu has something for everyone: polished salads, deviled eggs topped with hot-smoked salmon and cucumber, luscious brisket meatballs. Nicely cooked halibut, good house-made pasta with three-meat ragu and the best butterscotch pot de crème I've ever tasted.

Address: 10720 Preston Road, Dallas**Price range:** \$15 to \$29**Hours:** 5:30-10 p.m. Monday-Thursday; 5:30-11 p.m. Friday-Saturday**Info:** www.neighborhoodservicesdallas.com ; 214-368-1101**BROWNSTONE**

Top Chef graduate [Casey Thompson](#) lands in Fort Worth's hip new West Seventh complex in a warm, casual-chic spot with a seasonal, produce-driven menu and a hint of sweet Southern twang. Grandmother's Biscuits come in a wee ironstone skillet, fluffy and warm, with house-made sausage and sophisticated preserves. Chicken pot pies as bite-size turnovers are filled with tender chicken, potato and carrot in cream sauce. Crispy chicken livers with a side of fiery hot pepper-vinegar sauce are a true original. But the most glorious thing is the vegetables, whether potato dumplings with pecorino cheese, "puffed" fried okra or colorful succotash that draws on whatever's in season. Bravo.

Address: 840 Currie St., Fort Worth**Hours:** 5-10 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday; 11 a.m.-2 p.m., 4-11 p.m. Friday; 5 p.m.-11 p.m. Saturday; 10:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m., 5-10 p.m. Sunday**Price range:** \$20-\$30**Info:** www.brownstonerestaurants.com ; 817-332-1555**GERHARD'S GERMAN RESTAURANT**

The small town of Roanoke, northeast of Fort Worth, has one of the area's most bustling restaurant scenes, and that includes Gerhard's, a superb German restaurant from mom-and-pop Gerhard and Valrie Pelzer. They do the classics - sauerbraten, schnitzel, bratwurst, cabbage rolls, goulash and strudel - all from scratch, all expertly prepared. Potato pancakes are exceptional: pan-fried until crunchy, yet soft within. Spaetzle casserole is pure comfort food, with chewy-tender noodles in rich brown gravy with bits of bacon and melted Swiss cheese. Fried pickled baby beets no bigger than golf balls, in a crisp battered crust, are cute as could be. Ice cold beer on tap and live polka music on weekend nights will transport you straight to Munich.

Address: 301 S. Oak St., Roanoke**Hours:** 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Sunday-Thursday, 11 a.m.-11 p.m. Friday-Saturday**Price range:** \$15**Info:** www.gvrestaurants.com ; 817-491-0300**BOOTSIE'S HERITAGE CAFE**

Gasp. Greater Houston's best new restaurant is located in the quasi-rural northern exurb of Tomball. Chef Randy Rucker and his gifted young team are forging the Texas equivalent to New York's fabled Stone Barns at Blue Hill: a

restaurant with its own gardens, foraging program and intense connections to local producers of all kinds. The technique is modern, the vibe pared-down and unpretentious, the food as exciting as anything in America. Who cares if the hours are restricted when the 3rd Coast Tasting menus and near-weekly multicourse Heritage Dinners produce such thrills as a jazz riff on the freshest Gulf mackerel? A crudo with pickled elderberries; a beautifully singed head with charred lime; a soft egg-scramble with the fish's roe and liver, laced with foraged herbs and greens. The capper might be a hay-smoked length of bone-in fish on a tumble of pan-crisped okra and tomato, an ode to the new Gulf Coast. Go now - or in the new year, to Rucker's ambitious nearby tasting-menu project, Restaurant Connate.

Address: 112 Commerce St., Tomball

Price range: \$10-\$20

Hours: 11 a.m.-3 p.m., 6-9 p.m. Wednesday; 11 a.m.-3 p.m., 6-10 p.m. Thursday-Saturday; 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Sunday

Info: www.bootsiescafe.wordpress.com; 281-516-9699

LATIN BITES CAFE

Small and effortlessly chic, Latin Bites brings meticulous and gorgeously plated Peruvian fare to a sleepy corner of the near-downtown warehouse district. A BYOB policy and moderate prices make it Houston's bargain of the year. Chef Roberto Castre's ceviche and tiradito-style sashimi dishes vibrate with chile shadings: marigold aji, greeny-gold limon and salmon pink rocoto peppers. Just as compelling are masa-based arepitas capped with spicy braised meat, an elegant lamb-and-cilantro stew, and a Pisco and lucuma-shot tiramisu that gives new life to an old chestnut.

Address: 1302 Nance , Houston

Price range: \$10 to \$20

Hours: 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday-Saturday

Info: www.latinbitescatering.com; 713-229-8369

LÜKE

New Orleans celebrity chef **John Besh** has single-handedly raised the bar for service in San Antonio with the arrival of his first restaurant outside his home city. The German-French brasserie cuisine - with touches of the American South - is precisely on point and wonderful. Executive chef Steven McHugh presents favorites such as shrimp and grits, tempura-fried shrimp drizzled with remoulade, fried quail, steak frites and an array of house-made pâtés and sausages.

Address: 125 E. Houston St., San Antonio

Price range: \$10-\$30

Hours: 11 a.m.-11 p.m. daily

Info: www.lukesanantonio.com ; 210-227-5853

LA GLORIA ICE HOUSE

A combination of Culinary Institute of America training, experience in Las Vegas and extensive travels in Mexico has perfectly equipped chef Johnny Hernandez to bring street foods of interior Mexico to the heart of Tex-Mex country. The funky, retro ice house interior and often impeccable renditions of such dishes as tacos potosinos and tortas de milanesa keep the tables full. Outside tables, a small green space often filled with children, and a path along the San Antonio River add to its attractions.

Address: 100 E. Grayson , San Antonio

Price range: \$10-\$15

Hours: 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Sunday-Thursday; 11 a.m.-midnight Friday-Saturday

Info: www.lagloriaicehouse.com ; 210-267-9040



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