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VERONICA MARS RETURNS!  
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# Texas Monthly

THE NATIONAL MAGAZINE OF TEXAS

**WHERE TO EAT (AND DRINK, COOK, SHOP, SNACK, FEAST...) NOW!**

WAGYU RIB STEAK, CBD Provisions, Dallas

BBQ PORK BANH MI, Don Café, Houston

MAYA PRAWN, SPINY LOBSTER WITH BLOOD ORANGE, AND LIVE DIVER SCALLOP, Spoon Bar & Kitchen, Dallas

BISTECCA STRIPLOIN, Osteria Mazzantini, Houston

GRILLED QUAIL, Arro, Austin

SHUMAI, Sway, Austin

ÉPOISSES CHEESE, Arro, Austin

SQUID INK PASTA WITH UNI, Qui, Austin

WHOLE CRAB, Cajun Kitchen, Houston

featuring our **10** BEST NEW RESTAURANTS (AND BARS!)

AND SOME FINE TEXAS WINES, LOCAL CRAFT BEERS, SCRUMPTIOUS NOODLE HOUSES, URBAN FARMS, OLD-SCHOOL BUTCHERS, AND MUCH MORE



ALL ABOUT MY NEIGHBORHOOD by Mimi Swartz

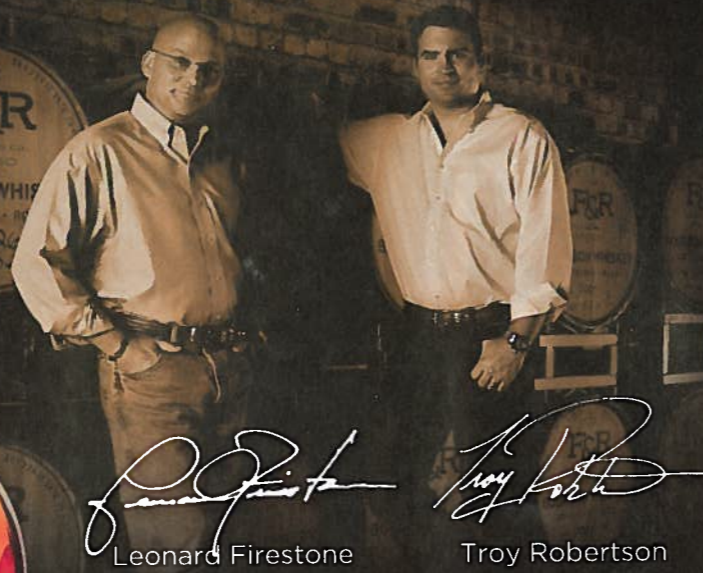
THE TEXTBOOK WARS ARE OVER. DISCUSS. by Tom Bartlett

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ONE BLEND THAT DOESN'T BLEND IN



Leonard Firestone Troy Robertson

“Exceptionally smooth and uniquely Texan, we hope you enjoy it!”



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# Texas Monthly

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**96 WHERE TO EAT (AND DRINK, COOK, SHOP, SNACK, FEAST, AND FORAGE) NOW**  
From fine dining to local beer, the Texas food scene is exploding with more energy, innovation, and sophistication than ever before. Come along as we hunt down the best new restaurants and bars, as well as some fine wines, scrumptious noodle houses, old-school butchers, great dives, urban farms, studios chefs, craft breweries...

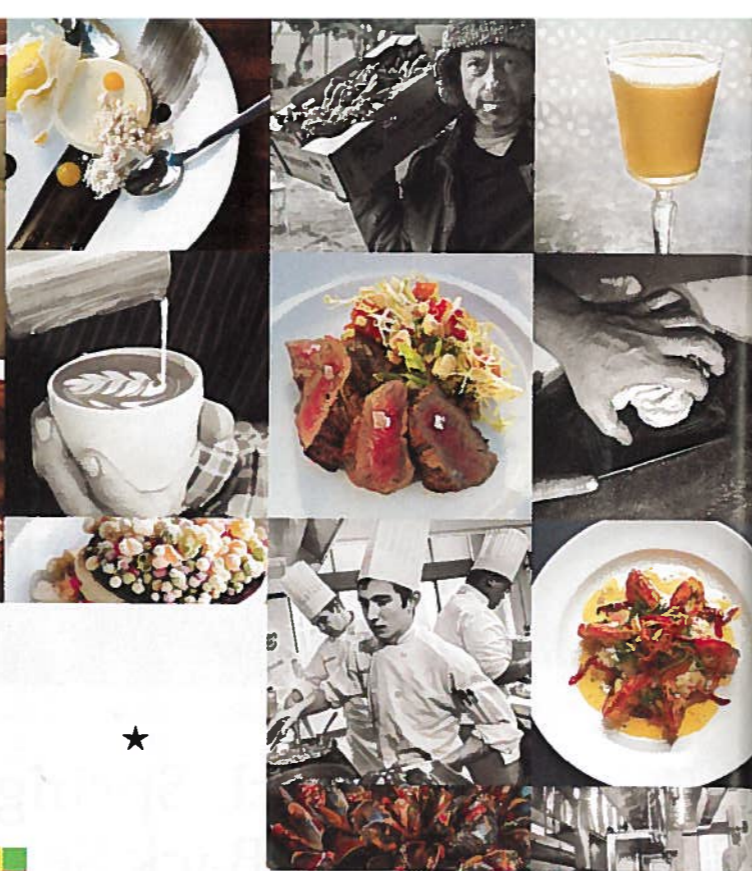
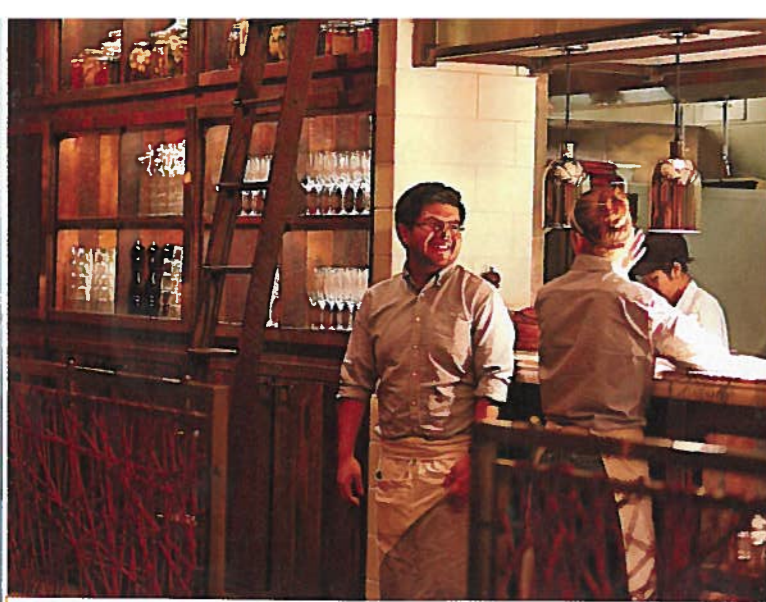
**118 A QUESTION OF MERCY**  
In 1998 famously tough Montague County district attorney Tim Cole sent a teenager to prison for life for his part in a brutal murder. The punishment haunts him to this day.  
**BY PAMELA COLLOFF**

**122 KNOWING MY PLACE**  
Woodland Heights may not be the fanciest neighborhood in Houston, or the quietest, or the coolest (and it can be a little full of itself), but it's mine.  
**BY MIMI SWARTZ**

**124 MISSION TO MARS**  
Rob Thomas was just looking for a way to breathe life into his beloved-but-canceled TV show *Veronica Mars*. He might have ended up changing the movie business.  
**BY JASON COHEN**

PHOTOGRAPH BY DARREN BRAUN

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(AND DRINK, COOK, SHOP,

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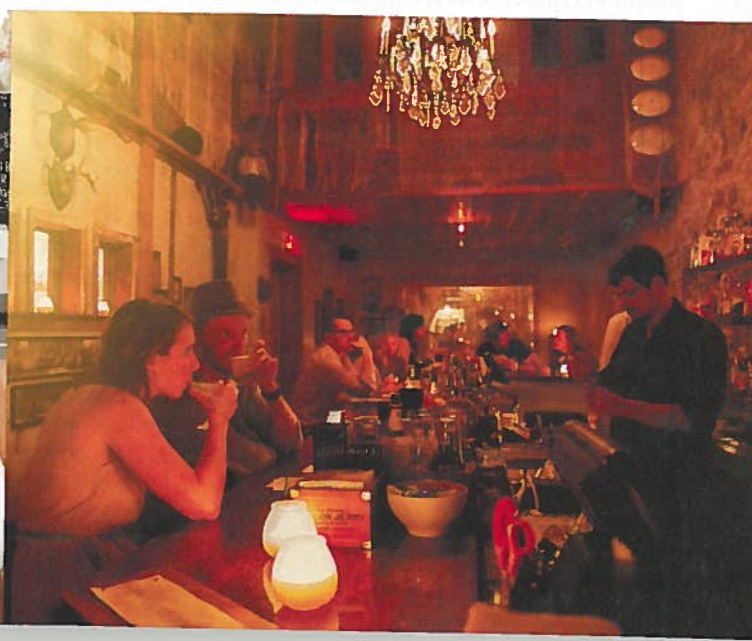
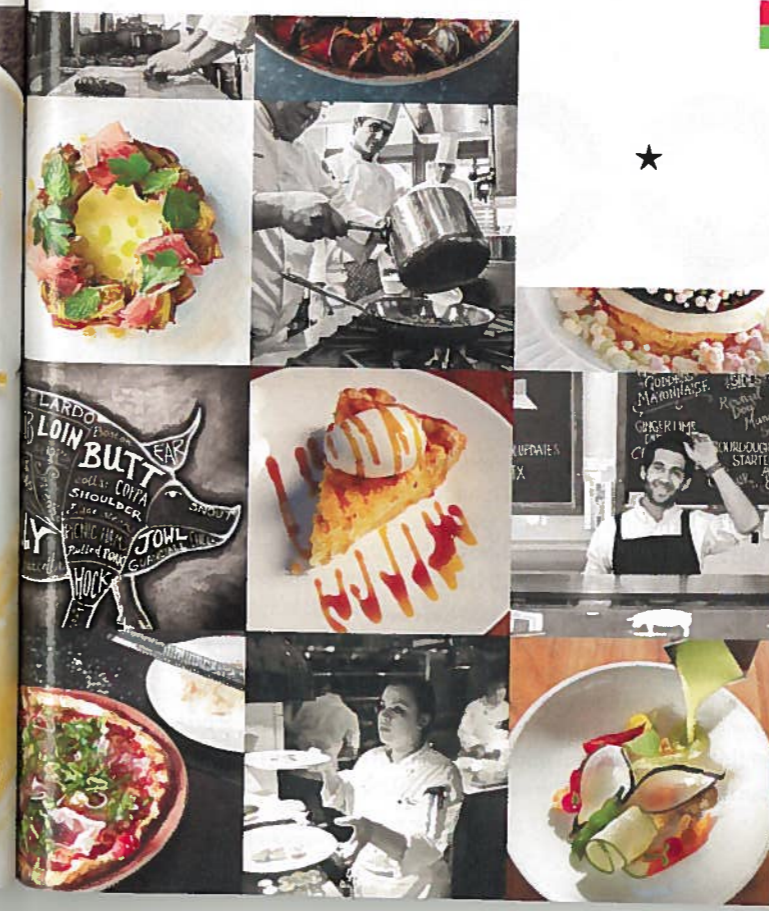
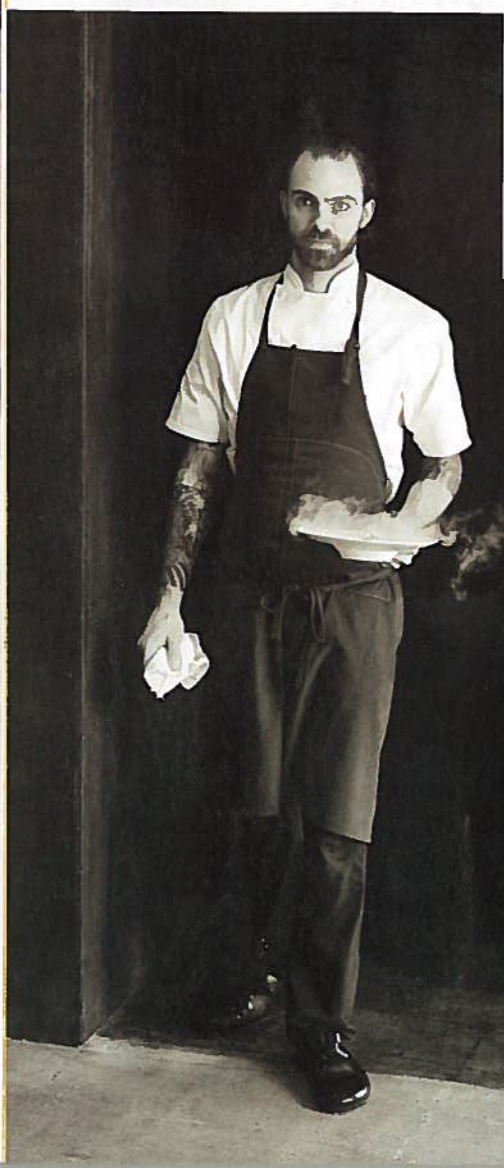
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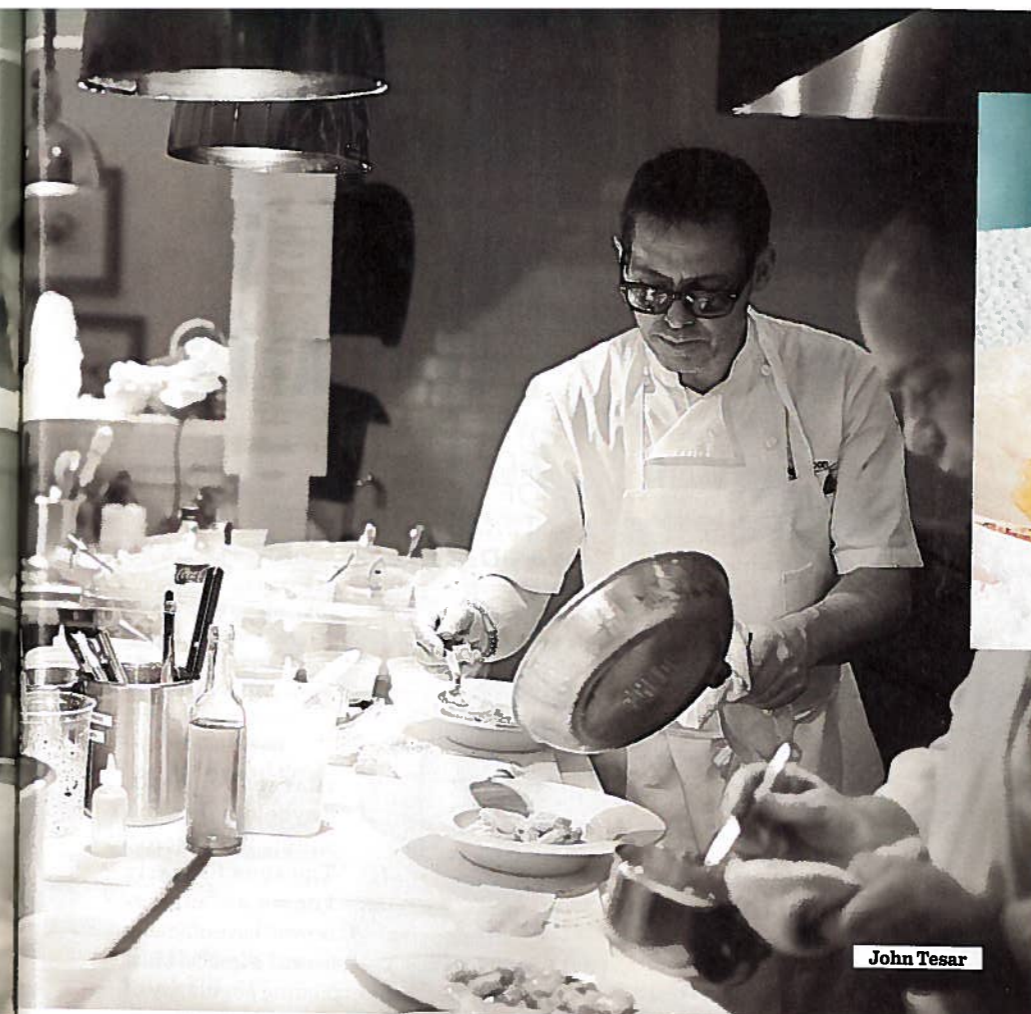
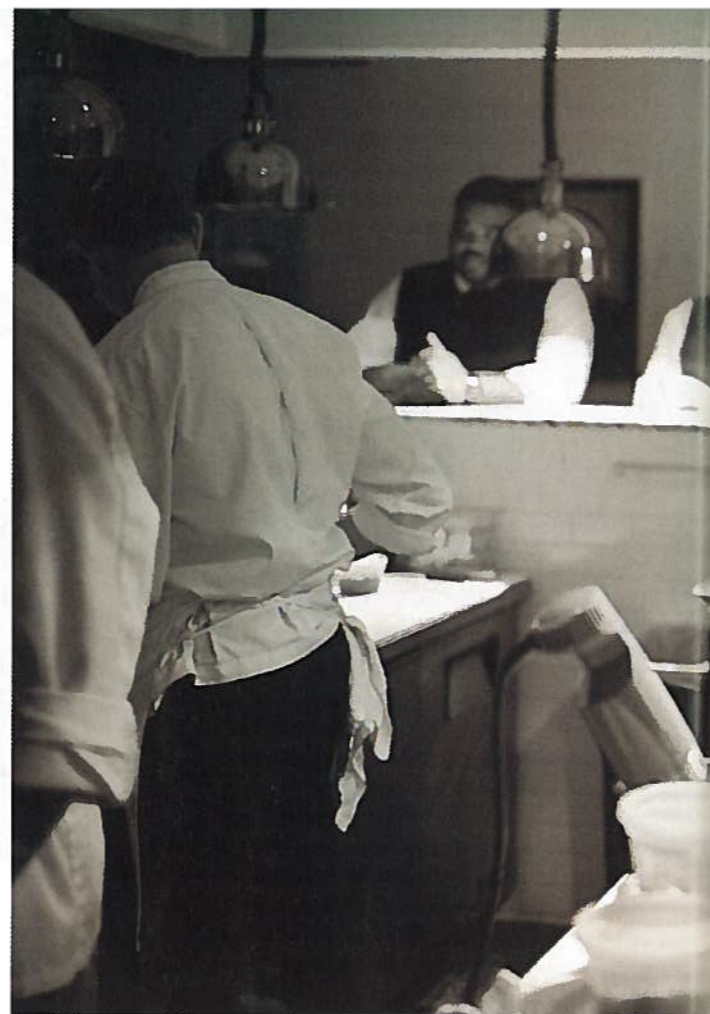
2014



**YOU COULD CALL IT A TIPPING POINT.** Over the past few years it's become undeniable that something big is happening in the Texas culinary world. To put it plainly, the food scene here is not just hot, it is on fire, burning at a rate that I've never seen before. Texas chefs are winning national culinary awards left and right—the James Beard Foundation named two Austin chefs as Best Chef: Southwest, in 2011 and 2012, and seven Texans have been named to *Food & Wine's* annual “ten best new chefs” list since 2001. In our cities, excellent new restaurants are opening so fast it's impossible to keep up with them. Scores of local culinary celebrations are springing up not only to extol the likes of whole-beast cookery but also to benefit hardworking farmers. Meanwhile, national food festival planners, seeing how much fun we're having, are starting up Texas editions. Television megastars like Anthony Bourdain of *Parts Unknown* and Andrew Zimmern of *Bizarre Foods*, not to mention professional gluttons like Adam Richman of *Man v. Food*, can't stay away. Every other week, the *New York Times* seems to run another travel story trumpeting the culinary attractions of our cities. ¶ In short, the country has discovered what we Texans already know: as much as we love our brisket and cheese enchiladas and chicken-fried steaks, they no longer solely define us. Our not-so-humble state has one of the richest, most diverse, and most electrifying food scenes in the country. ¶ This month we are rolling out the thirteenth edition of “Where to Eat Now.” Typically, this annual roundup focuses exclusively on our list of the state's best new restaurants. But when we started thinking about this edition, that seemed too narrow a focus. So we branched out. Because man cannot live by food alone, we delved into key liquid assets—craft cocktails, Texas wine, and local beer—to tell you where and what to drink now. Over the past few years, a revolution in meat production has taken place, exemplified by the heritage pork butchery at Houston's Revival Market, so we also sampled the state's charcuterie. Because Houston is our most deliciously diverse city, we compiled a list of the quintessential local dishes. And down in San Antonio, we lifted the lid on the pots bubbling away at the Culinary Institute of America, where a Latin-oriented curriculum is transforming what would-be chefs learn in school. ¶ All this tasty activity provides a sumptuous background for the main attraction: the ten best new restaurants in Texas. Grab a table and get ready for a treat. The eating has never been better.

by Patricia Sharpe

**To be considered for our list of the best new restaurants in Texas, an establishment must have opened between October 2012 and November 2013. (Second locations of existing restaurants are not eligible.) All selected restaurants have been visited multiple times. “New” means either a brand-new restaurant that opened during that time frame or an existing restaurant that had a fresh start in at least two of the following three categories: chef, concept, and name. For instance, Jeffrey's, in Austin, got a new chef and menu, and was closed for a year for remodeling, but kept its old name. The changes made it eligible for consideration, and it merited an honorable mention this time around.**



John Tesar



Wild-caught king salmon, on a striking black platter, is set off by trout roe and rosy roasted beets for an emphatic, rootsy taste profile. But the most seductive starter is the live diver scallop lavished with brown butter, gently warmed in a seafood dashi broth, and crowned with a small fortune in Perigord truffles (above). This was the most amazing thing I've eaten in years, if not decades. It may cause you to swoon, but try to maintain your composure long enough to get to the entrées. You wouldn't want to miss the shimmering arctic char with its crisp, heavenly skin and garnish of pickled hon shimeji mushrooms and lotus root, or the classic skate wing with capers and Maine mussels, or the filet of swordfish underscored by a grass-green parsley purée and basking in a sassy vinaigrette of tomatoes and picholine olives. Desserts, from pastry chef David Collier, keep pace with the seafood, one of the most fun being the deconstructed s'mores, a tour de force involving chocolate panna cotta and toasty brûléed marshmallow cream.

If you can, snag one of the three-sided, sea foam-blue booths or a counter seat, where you can watch your order being cooked and meticulously plated. The mood is not really formal, but the service is too smart to be called casual. Spoon keeps things comfortable in spite of its high-style menu. *Opened November 7, 2012. 8220 Westchester Dr (214-368-8220). L Tue–Fri. D Tue–Sun. \$\$\$*

Dallas

# SPOON BAR & KITCHEN

OPENING SPREAD: DARREN BRAUN; JOEY HORTON; KEVIN MARPLE; LEANN MUELLER; DEBORA SMALL; WYNN AYERS; AND JEFF WILSON

A FEW MONTHS after he opened Spoon Bar & Kitchen, at the end of 2012, chef John Tesar said wistfully to me, “When people in Dallas think of seafood restaurants, I want Spoon to be on the list.” He has his wish. Not only is Spoon a hit in Dallas, it's got a growing fan base in the rest of the state and beyond. In few other places is the bounty of the sea more pristine or prepared with more imagination and care. This is the best new restaurant in Texas. ¶ Dinner at Spoon, with its companionable front-room bar, is likely to start dramatically, when your waiter delivers a glass-covered dish bearing a tidy rectangle of fantastic smoked-sturgeon headcheese, with horseradish crème fraîche, a dab of chive gel, and black sturgeon caviar. When the lid is lifted, a puff of smoke—a.k.a. Texas perfume—wafts your way. And this is just the amuse-bouche, people! The crudos, which must not be skipped, have some of the menu's most exciting and unexpected combinations of flavors. Filmy ribbons of cuttlefish are brilliantly tossed with pink peppercorns, jalapeño oil, and yuzu.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY KEVIN MARPLE



2.

Dallas

# CASA RUBIA

**INSPIRED BY THE** tidal wave of creativity pouring out of Spain over the past decade, chef Omar Flores has taken that country's abundance of ingredients and ideas and given them a radical yet reverential twist. The results are electrifying, with flavors so complex that you find yourself pausing mid-bite to ponder what is going on. One such dish is his crispy fried artichokes topped with thin-sliced salt-cured tuna (above). You grab a leaf and swish it in a big, luscious dollop of yellow saffron aioli, dragging along leaves of parsley and mint. In another of my favorites, a square of black cod luxuriates in an emulsion of butter touched with chervil, the sauce pooling deliciously in the bowl. A paella variant involving noodles, cooked in a potent reduction of tomatoes and Spanish chorizo, has a wonderfully charred flavor. Couples intent on a tête-à-tête will find many obliging nooks in the spare, dark room, while the two communal tables provide inviting spots for solo diners. Do not fail to notice the leg of jamón ibérico sitting proudly on the kitchen counter, just as its porky brethren do in restaurants and markets all over Spain. *Opened November 18, 2013. 3011 Gulden Ln, Ste 116 (469-513-6349). D Mon-Sat. \$\$-\$\$\$*

TEXASMONTHLY.COM

Read a story about Trinity Groves, the Dallas restaurant incubator where Casa Rubia was born.



## BARS AND CRAFTS

WELCOME TO THE GOLDEN AGE OF INDEPENDENT TEXAS BEER.

by Dan Oke



THAT IPA YOU prefer may be local, but stop calling it a "micro." The suds formerly known as "micro-brews" have officially

evolved into "craft beers," a lexical shift that reflects the exploding popularity of independent breweries (there are currently 2,500 nationwide, the most since the 1880's). In Texas this means that more awesome beer is flowing than ever before. Lately, the state's craft brewers have emerged as a force to be reckoned with, winning taste tests against top brewers from historically beer-proud regions like the Pacific Northwest and New England. At the 2013 Great American Beer Festival, in Denver, a kind of craft-brewing Super Bowl, Texas brewmasters brought home an impressive ten medals.

What's more, new laws passed during the 2013 legislative session will make it easier for smaller, independent brewpubs, formerly restricted to on-premises sales, to package and distribute their beers, so there's no doubt this trend will continue. The new rules also pave the way for larger breweries to add shops and barrooms. In other words, Texas craft beer is poised to get even bigger. "It's more change than we've seen in Texas beer laws in a very long time," says Tony Drewry, of the Texas Tavern League, a trade association. Austin and Dallas have the most diverse selection of breweries, but well-curated tap walls can be found from Houston to El Paso. We turned to some barkeeps and industry insiders for local recommendations.

### HEFEWEIZEN

BIG BEND BREWING COMPANY

■ In far-flung West Texas, Beto Longoria, of El Paso's celebrated gastropub the Hoppy Monk, swears by the Alpine-based Big Bend Brewing Company. To beat the desert heat he suggests their crisp Hefeweizen, a Bavarian-style wheat beer with a bright lemony nose and moderate alcohol (5.6 percent).

BIGBENDBREWING.COM  
3401 U.S. 90 W., ALPINE  
(432-837-3700).  
OPEN MON-FRI 2-4.

### ATRIAL RUBICITE

JESTER KING BREWERY

■ "Austin's still in its infancy in terms of brewing," says John Thomas "J.T." Egli, who with his wife, Brandy, runs the bar Craft Pride. "But we've got some kick-ass beers." Egli says the most ass-kickingest is Jester King's barrel-aged Atrial Rubicite, which is made with one ton of Washington state raspberries.

JESTERKINGBREWERY.COM  
13005 FITZHUGH RD. AUSTIN  
(512-537-5100). OPEN FRI 5-9,  
SAT & SUN NOON-6.

### YELLOW ROSE

LONE PINT BREWERY

■ At Houston's Hay Merchant, owner Kevin Floyd dedicates about one third of his 85 taps to Texas beer. He says his current favorite is the Yellow Rose, from Lone Pint Brewery, in Magnolia. The beer is known as a "SMaSH" for its single-malt, single-hop recipe, deriving floral notes from a mild, citrusy new strain of hops known as Mosaic.

LONEPINT.COM  
507 COMMERCE, MAGNOLIA  
(281-731-5466). OPEN SAT 11-3.

### VELVET HAMMER

PETICOLAS BREWING COMPANY

■ With a sweet malt flavor and a heady amalgam of hops that help mask a 9 percent alcohol content, this imperial red ale ranks high on Tony Drewry's list of Dallas craft beers. "The name says it all," laughs Drewry. "It tastes smooth like velvet, but it hits you like a hammer."

PETICOLASBREWING.COM  
2026 FARRINGTON, DALLAS  
(214-234-7600). PUBLIC  
TOURS EVERY FIRST AND  
THIRD SAT 1-3.

### EVIL OWL AMBER

BRANCHLINE BREWING

■ Steve Newman, the owner of the Southtown neighborhood Friendly Spot icehouse and the Alamo Street Eat Bar, touts this American red ale. It's got an easy-drinking profile, with a touch of sweet caramel from a combination of crystal and CaraMunich malts. "San Antonio is really catching up," says Newman.

BRANCHLINEBREWING.COM  
3633 METRO PKWY,  
SAN ANTONIO (210-403-2097).  
OPEN SAT NOON-6.

