

Dining review: Driftwood in Dallas

Article



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Crispy seared golden trout with serrano ham, pimenton roasted fingerlings, english peas with sherry vinegar pan sauce at Driftwood

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Driftwood
642 W. Davis, Dallas
214 942-2530

By Cary Darling

Posted 8:13am on Wednesday, Jun. 20, 2012

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Executive chef Omar Flores, left, and owner Jonn Baudoin

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Toasted coriander seared sea scallops with roasted corn, fava bean scuccotash, cornbread puree and grilled okra at Driftwood.

DFW.com/Richard W. Rodriguez / Richard W. Rodriguez

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The crispy seared golden trout with serrano ham and fingerling potatoes

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Driftwood

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Driftwood restaurant in Oak Cliff

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Driftwood restaurant in Oak Cliff

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Driftwood

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Driftwood
642 W. Davis, Dallas
214 942-2530
Driftwood-dallas.com
Hours: 5 p.m.-midnight
Tuesday-Sunday

By Cary Darling
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Let's hope Driftwood, the latest entry in Oak Cliff's race to dominate the Dallas restaurant scene, has better mojo than its predecessor at this address: Con Fusion, a Latin-Asian joint that started off well but ended up living up to its name and then closing. The place sat vacant -- a sad, lonely hulk -- for what seemed like ages.

Driftwood's culinary mission is clearer. Owner Jonn Baudoin (former general manager at Dallas Fish Market and Ristorante Nicola and manager at Craft) and chef Omar Flores (Abacus) are emphasizing the glories of seafood in a part of town where no one else is putting fish first.

So there's certainly an air of expectation upon walking in Driftwood, though the first thing you notice is that the restaurant seems to have something of a split personality. On the one hand, the rather noisy interior, patrons' casual dress, its location along funky Davis Avenue (right next to Bolsa Mercado and across the street from the greatness that is El Si Hay taqueria), and the outdoor patio, would seem to indicate a casual dining experience. (And the driftwood wall hangings add a nice, rustic touch.)

However, the menu and the prices remind you that, yes, this is fine dining after all.

Fortunately, the dishes are worth the minor annoyances.

The appetizers are divided into crudo/shellfish plates (\$10-\$12), small plates (including salads, \$8-\$15) and three other items that are listed as "to share." We chose the octopus carpaccio (\$12), the Maine lobster roll (\$15), and crispy Brussels sprouts (\$8).

The spicy carpaccio was good, the crispy brussels sprouts (with pork belly in a fish sauce) proved as addictive as any french fry. (Who knew?) But the clear winner was the lobster roll, made with tarragon aioli and gherkins and served with truffle potato gaufrettes. In my ideal world, Driftwood would put in a drive-through window, get some fresh bread from Bolsa, and make this lobster into what would be the world's most amazing sandwich. But then they'd probably have to charge \$75 for it. Dream crushed.

The lobster roll proved to be a nice warm-up for the main courses: the grilled Nova Scotia salmon (\$26), the golden trout (\$22) and the pan-roasted diver sea scallops (\$22). The salmon, with artichokes, fava beans, cipollini onions, green garlic and a vanilla-barigoule vinaigrette, was mild yet flavorful. The trout, seared with serrano ham and served with roasted fingerling potatoes in a sherry vinegar sauce, sported a delicious piquancy. The scallops, however, were the highlight. Coriander-seared with fiddlehead ferns, pickled ramps, kumquat, cauliflower puree and cured ham broth, they offered a riot of subtle flavors that all worked together.

Though we didn't try anything from Driftwood's drinks menu, it's a fairly impressive selection. For example, the beers include Chimay Blue (\$8) and a Stone Sublimely Self Righteous IPA (\$15).

Now, on to dessert. The blueberry buckle with olive-oil ice cream (\$8) came highly recommended by the server. Though satisfactory, it was hardly a knockout take on the cobbler. Far better was the creme brulee (\$7), a rich and heady blend of vanilla and cream, with just the right amount of crunch without being overpowering. It proved a scrumptious end to a delicious evening.

If Baudoin and Flores can keep up this level of cooking -- and develop a reputation as heady as such fellow Oak Cliff hot spots as Lucia, Mesa and Campo Modern Country Bistro -- then Driftwood shouldn't have anything to worry about. The building's bad voodoo may have finally been exorcised.

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