

THE 11TH ANNUAL GUIDE TO THE BEST IN DALLAS

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DALLAS / FORT WORTH

The Best of Big D

including

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WOMEN'S CLOTHES
JEWELRY STORE
FRENCH FRIES
FLORIST
BREAKFAST
DESSERT
HOME ACCESSORIES
KIDS' BOUTIQUE
ITALIAN
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sweet!
WHO HAS
DALLAS' BEST
ICE CREAM?
PAGE 63

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY
MANNY RODRIGUEZ
FOOD STYLIST
PAIGE FLETCHER

DOG: SYLVIA ELZAFON; FASHION: SCOTT WOMACK; ACTOR: BILLY SURFACE



30

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92







THE DISH

DRIFTWOOD

NORTH OAK CLIFF

642 W. Davis St.

214-942-2530

CUISINE

Seafood

PRICE LEVEL

\$\$

DRINKS

*Seafood-friendly cocktails
and wine*

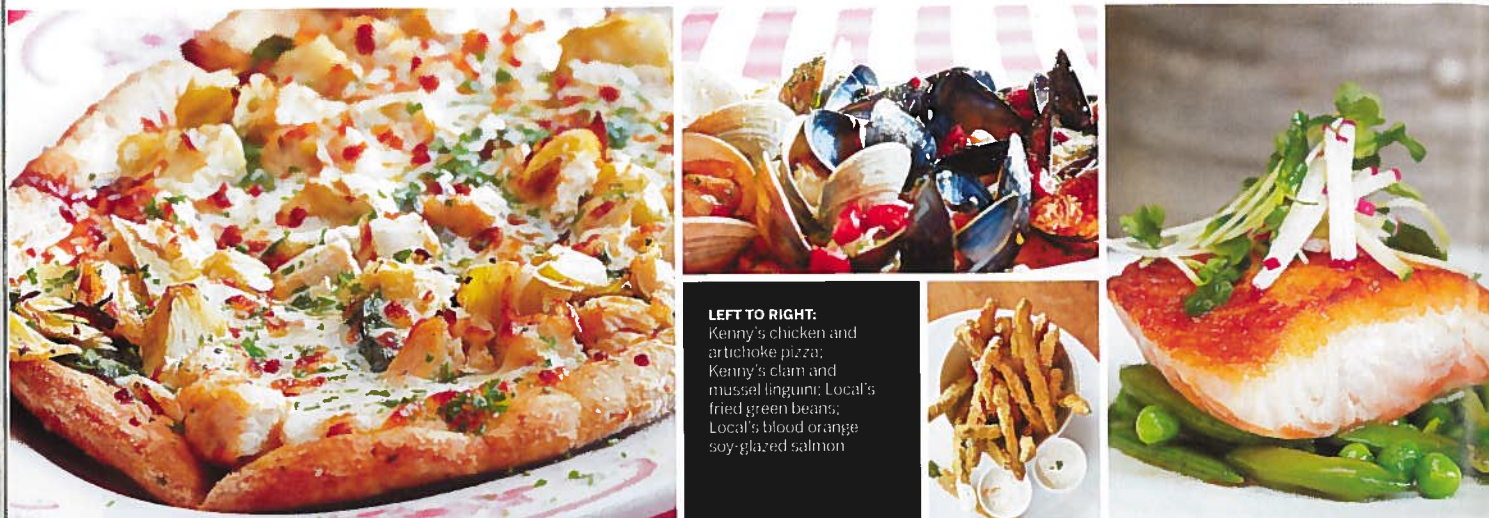
BEST BETS

*Ahi tuna crudo, char-grilled
octopus, milk-poached chicken*

SKIP IT

Any of the desserts





LEFT TO RIGHT: Kenny's chicken and artichoke pizza; Kenny's clam and mussel linguine; Local's fried green beans; Local's blood orange soy-glazed salmon

REVIEWS

REVISIT // ITALIAN
KENNY'S ITALIAN KITCHEN

You'd be surprised to learn how hard it can be for dining critics to find volunteers to join them on a review. So imagine my joy when, after inviting friends and family to join me at Kenny's Italian Kitchen, I was flooded with gushing replies. "Oh, please," my sister-in-law said. "I'm dying to go there." We sashayed up to the hostess stand on a stormy Monday night around 6:30 and were placed on a 30-minute waitlist. The bar was three deep, and the dining room was jammed. Two hours later, I left confused. There is nothing special about the food at Kenny's. It's basically enormous portions of familiar red-sauce-Italian fare served in a *Godfather*-meets-*Sopranos* setting complete with stereotypical red-and-white checkered tablecloths anchored with straw-wrapped Chianti

bottles. The meatballs were bland, and all of the pastas we tried were overcooked. My baked ziti was submerged in a sea of marinara mixed with Alfredo sauce. Three bites of such richness and I was out. Ditto for the thick, creamy spaghetti carbonara topped with a fistful of bacon. We asked our server to recommend a seafood entrée, and he informed us that he really didn't like fish and that he worked there because it helped with his ADD. We chose Copper River salmon, but it was past its prime. I warned my sister-in-law not to eat it, but she did. The next day she sent me an email: "I've been up with stomach cramps since 3 AM. I think I'm dying." Guess it will be awhile before I get her back in the dining rotation. 5100 Belt Line Rd., Ste. 764. 972-661-9380. \$\$\$ **T** -NANCY NICHOLS

REVISIT // NEW AMERICAN
LOCAL

Though she recently opened new breakfast-and-lunch-only spot Rosemont a few doors down from Local, chef/owner Tracy Miller's original restaurant hasn't changed much since debuting in Deep Ellum's historic Boyd Hotel in 2003. Local still has a lounge-like vibe that feels downtown cool. Miller's cooking was and still is an exercise in delicious simplicity. But over the past nine years, the Dallas dining scene has changed. Farm to fork is de rigueur. Glam has been replaced by rustic decor. Chefs are daring diners with organ meats and oddities from the sea. In its own steadfast way, Local seems a bit dated. That is, it did until we revisited it recently and remembered why it's one of the city's best restaurants. On our last visit, we arrived early to hang out in the sleek lounge area, sipping Local's signature Champagne drink dotted with a ball of rosemary grapefruit sorbet. Once seated, we surveyed what Miller refers to as a Modern

American menu. We found nothing revelatory or challenging, not that it mattered. Soon we were swooning over appetizers such as ahi tuna tartare with English cucumber slaw, pan-seared Maine lobster cakes, and seared Hudson Valley foie gras atop mini house-made Texas toast and a swirl of Madeira-vanilla bean syrup. A couple of entrée choices felt a bit heavy-handed. The juicy tenderloin bucked the trend of flavorless grass-fed beef. But the Tawny port balsamic finish was a bit too sweet. Likewise, a side of thyme-scented wild mushrooms overwhelmed a lovely rosemary-and-garlic-rubbed lamb loin. Better were the seared scallops, a sometimes yawn-inducing dish that, in Miller's expert hands, perfectly cooked and accented with a citrus butter glaze, blew us away. The dish is indicative of Local's enduring charm: stylish, simple, and effortless. 2936 Elm St. 214-752-7500. \$\$\$ **F** -TODD JOHNSON

REVISIT // NEW AMERICAN
NATALIE'S RESTAURANT

This spot opened 22 years ago as a charming home cooking restaurant with a short menu and a BYOB policy. In 2009, owner Al Ahmedus took over the space next door and launched Al's Steakhouse & Salad Bar. The steak place didn't work out, so Ahmedus combined both concepts and menus



THREE SALAD PLATTER

into one restaurant. Now Natalie's features comfy favorites such as meatloaf, beef goulash, and pecan-crusted chicken alongside a sophisticated selection of Prime steaks. The only thing that hasn't changed: the ladies-who-lunch crowd still flocks to Natalie's for hearty soups, creative salads, quiches, and Southern-inspired specials. The kitchen turns out two notable chicken salads. One combines diced white meat with curry and mango chutney; the other is a more traditional mix of chicken, mayonnaise, and celery. All salads come with a basket of freshly baked specialty breads. The BYOB policy has been replaced by a full bar and a short, anemic, albeit affordable, wine list with a lineup of the usual suspects. Natalie's is comfortable by day and a nice neighborhood steakhouse at night. 5940 Royal Ln. 214-739-0362. \$\$-\$\$\$ **T** -N.N.

EAT THIS NOW

MAINE LOBSTER ROLL

With Truffle Potato Gaufrettes

CHEF OMAR FLORES
DRIFTWOOD
612 W. Davis St. 214-912-2530

LOBSTER SALAD: Fresh Maine lobster is poached, chilled, and broken into pieces. It is then mixed with an aioli fortified with shallot, fennel, gherkins, parsley, tarragon, chervil, and chives.

GARNISH: The roll is topped and the plate is garnished with tomato powder.

GAUFRETTES: A mandoline is used to slice the thin gaufrettes (waffle chips). They are soaked in ice water overnight and fried at a low temperature until golden brown. Once out of the fryer, the chips are seasoned with fleur de sel and lightly sprayed with fresh truffle-infused oil to give them a slight truffle aroma.



BREAD: Brioche from Empire Baking Company is trimmed to size and toasted with clarified butter.

SIDE DISH

Just Add Vodka



STEPHANIE SANOJA

Stephanie Sanoja's mother, Lily, and her great aunt Gladys lived in the Garden District in New Orleans. Like all classy Southern ladies, Lily always had a pitcher of Bloody Marys at the ready in case any of her friends dropped by. That party spirit inspired Sanoja to get the recipe and keep it a secret. The formula remains under wraps, but at least it's now for sale. Sanoja left her job in 2008 to launch GARDEN DISTRICT BLOODY MARYS. She sells the New Orleans-style concoction in collectable, reusable glass carafes, decorated by Oak Cliff artist Gretchen Goetz. Sanoja, a working mom, not only toasts the strong women of her family with her drink, she plans to hire some "part-time mommas" as her company grows. Gardendistrictbloodymarys.com. 214-924-5583. Available at Spec's, Greenz, Talulah Belle, Brumley Gardens, Kindred Spirits, and Bolsa Mercado. -N.N.