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BLOWN AWAY

The cool, the coveted, the controversial: The Hot Issue 2013

Driftwood in Oak Cliff is hotter than hot. Can owner Jonn Baudoin and chef Omar Flores do it again with a brand-new tapas place at Trinity Groves? For critic **LESLIE BRENNER**, the anticipation level is high

FIRESTARTERS, THE SEQUEL

photographs by MANNY RODRIGUEZ



Jonn Baudoin and Omar Flores are really going places. Don't worry: That doesn't mean they are leaving their posts at Driftwood, where they are owner and chef, respectively. That would be tragic, as Flores, far right, is cooking at the height of his powers there. Baudoin, near right, for his part, runs a wonderfully laid-back and welcoming dining room, with a wine list that is refreshingly food-friendly, approachable and compelling. At this point, the Oak Cliff seafood spot is one of the best restaurants in the city.

But Flores and Baudoin are poised to launch another venture — a modern tapas restaurant. Their new baby, Casa Rubia, is the most exciting project announced to date for Trinity Groves, the West Dallas restaurant incubator development that is arguably the hottest thing going in Dallas dining this season. (The other contender would be The Joule downtown, where the new CBD Provisions is scheduled to open this month.)

Flores' menu will spotlight seasonality — "taking classics, putting a spin on them and making them our own," as he puts it. In the planning: Mussels escabèche presented in a sardine tin and served with faux chicharrones flavored with mushrooms, garlic and shallots. And fideos (vermicelli-like pasta) done up with calamari, lobster, squid ink, tomato confit and aioli. "Catalonia is my favorite area of Spain," says the chef, "so I want to utilize a lot of seafood."

Baudoin plans an all-Spanish wine list, with lots of sherries on offer. Makes sense: Tapas were originally designed to go with southern Spain's delightful fortified wines.

And yes — there will be paellas.

I can't wait.

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