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BLOOD, SWEAT & CHEERS

How the Plano Panthers Cheer Team became
WORLD CHAMPIONS



SEPTEMBER 2012 \$4.99



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IT'S A
CHALICE,
NOT A
GLASS.



She is a thing of beauty

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY
ELIZABETH LAVIN



MUFFIN: KEVIN MARPLE; FASHION: KRISTIAN AND SCOT REDMAN; SMITH: BODE HELM



NEWCOMER

KINGS OF THE SEA

Omar Flores and Jonn Baudoin finally bring adventurous seafood dining to Dallas. BY TODD JOHNSON

DALLAS IS OCTOPUS CRAZY. IT'S THE EXOTIC protein of the moment, popping up on menus all over the city. Chefs love it. Foodies brazenly order it, as if the photogenic cephalopod is some culinary badge of courage. But many local diners are still skeptical. At least that was my take when the waiter delivered my entrée at new Oak Cliff restaurant Driftwood. "Nuh-uh," said my tablemate as he wrinkled his nose. A nearby couple leaned in for a closer look. "Is that the octopus?" asked a well-coifed woman. I nodded. "Hmmm," she replied, intrigued yet still leery. "Well, it certainly looks interesting. Let us know how it tastes."

In a word? Effortless. Perhaps that seems like an odd description for a dish. Savory. Tasty. Delicious. Those are more common adjectives for a dining review, and, rest assured, I'll get to those in a bit. But after several visits to Driftwood, I was delighted by the ease of each experience, from the service to the atmosphere to the complex cooking that never felt labored. That is the definition of effortless, and it's a trait not often found in new restaurants.

Credit Driftwood's dream duo of executive chef Omar Flores and owner Jonn Baudoin. Flores spent five years

at Abacus, three of those as executive sous chef. Baudoin has managed many Dallas restaurants, including Mi Piaci, Salve, Ristorante Nicola, and Dallas Fish Market. Baudoin and Flores were friends before they opened Driftwood, and their collaboration went swimmingly. "We hit it off," Baudoin says. "We could communicate right off the bat. Omar created his vision for Driftwood's menu at a tasting for me, and he blew me out of the water."

That connection might explain Driftwood's ease. Many first-time restaurateurs feel the need to dazzle and excite. Unfortunately, they often veer into overkill. But Baudoin plays it low-key. Much like its name, Driftwood is all easy cool and seaside chic, exuding a relaxed, Hamptons-like vibe. It's a welcome respite from the overdone heritage restaurant design that seems to be de rigueur these days. The service is spot on as well, with a knowledgeable staff making deft recommendations. Baudoin welcomes guests and works the small room, clearing dishes, checking on patrons, and making fast friends without ever being overly solicitous. After 17 years in the restaurant

THE DISH

DRIFTWOOD

NORTH OAK CLIFF
842 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

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SKIP IT
Any of the desserts

ONLINE

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DRIFT AWAY: (left to right) Driftwood's coastal decor; Jonn Baudoin and Omar Flores; clams with fennel pork sausage; fluke crudo with grape verjus

