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THE BEST NEW RESTAURANTS

— 2014 —

THERE WERE PLENTY OF HIGH-PROFILE OPENINGS THIS YEAR, but many failed to deliver an experience worthy of their price points. Restaurateurs learned a lesson: trends have shifted. Younger diners value a gourmet meal, but they don't want to pay for the overhead of an expensive finish-out. Trinity Groves, the restaurant incubator program in West Dallas, led the charge on this front. One of the many places that opened there this year stands above the others. Ramen pushed pho out of the hot-liquid lunch spotlight. I found a fine bowl hidden in a shopping center in Addison. Charcuterie and locally brewed beer grabbed headlines from gourmet burgers, and pictures of pig heads and posh poutines popped up all over Instagram and Facebook. Fast food is now faster and healthier, and all things Asian are hot. It was a wild culinary ride this year. Here were my favorite stops.

BY NANCY NICHOLS || PHOTOGRAPHY BY KEVIN MARPLE

CHEF ILLUSTRATIONS BY KATHRYN RATHKE



GEMMA'S PAPPARDELLE WITH BRAISED RABBIT, PANCETTA, SWISS CHARD, AND THYME



PATÉ DE CONEJO



TEXAS QUAIL



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CHEF OMAR FLORES HAS CREATED a sophisticated tapas menu unlike any other in Dallas. You won't find predictable small plates of shrimp and garlic or Spanish omelets. Instead, you'll unearth a spectacular cauliflower confit blended with capers and wrapped in a rosemary brown butter with a slightly sweet finish, thanks to a splash of sherry. Your taste buds will thank you for introducing them to an upscale version of bacalao, a salted and dried cod that is reconstituted before preparation. Flores uses fresh cod and surrounds the tender fish with strips of lobster mushrooms and floats it in a shallow bath of leek broth.

Creating a meat and cheese board allows you to combine familiar choices like manchego cheese and jamón serrano and more adventurous options (to some diners) such as Ibérico de bellota and, when available, Torta del Casar cheese. If you aren't familiar with the finer foods, wines, and sherries of Spain, servers are well-trained and can guide you through the experience. All of the complex plates are meant for sharing, and they are delivered intermittently. This allows you to savor each dish before the next one arrives. Between plates, sip on one of the 13 sherries they offer by the glass, or order a bottle or two of well-priced Spanish wine. If you love great food, wonderful wines, and are lucky enough to have a group of friends to share them with, you can't help but have a good time at Casa Rubia. 3011 Gulden Ln., Ste. 116. 469-513-6349.



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