



---

**CHEF** **OMAR** FLORES

---



THE RESUME OF

# CHEF OMAR FLORES

CONTACT

omar@chefomarflores.com | 915.256.5807

## EXPERIENCE

**NOV 2013 | Present**

OWNER | EXECUTIVE CHEF

Casa Rubia | Dallas, Texas

**APR 2012 | 2014**

EXECUTIVE CHEF

Driftwood | Dallas, Texas

**2006 | 2011**

EXECUTIVE SOUS CHEF

Abacus | Dallas, Texas

## EDUCATION

**2004 | 2006**

ASSOCIATES OF CULINARY ARTS

Culinary Institute of America  
Hyde Park, New York

**1999 | 2004**

BACHELOR OF HOTEL MANAGEMENT

New Mexico State University  
Las Cruces, New Mexico



## BIO

**CHEF OMAR FLORES** was introduced into the culinary world at a very young age. As soon as he could hold a knife, Chef Flores started in the kitchen, helping his father in their family-owned restaurants. He holds a bachelor degree in Hotel & Restaurant Management from New Mexico State University and is a graduate of the prestigious Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, NY.

Chef Flores staged at several restaurants around the country before settling in Texas at Dallas' Abacus restaurant for five years, only to become Executive Sous Chef for an additional three. In 2008, he took Second Place White Wine Winner in the Dallas Wine & Food Festival 'Rising Stars Chef' competition for his curry seared diver sea scallops with toasted Israeli couscous, grilled vegetables and Meyer lemon sauce recipe. In 2009, his Hiramasa Tuna recipe won First Place in the Clean Seas Tuna recipe contest.

Continuing his success, Chef Flores opened Driftwood as Executive Chef in March 2012. Located in Oak Cliff & The Bishop Arts District, Driftwood received a Four-Star rating from Dallas Morning News and has been featured in numerous local publications.

Chef Flores was selected as one of '2012 Best Chefs in DFW' and named one of '2013 Best in DFW Seafood Restaurants'. More recently Omar was nominated for Food & Wine Magazine's People's Choice Best New Chef - Southwest.

Casa Rubia is Chef Flores' newest endeavor. Located in Trinity Groves at the base of the new Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge in West Dallas, it opened November 2013. Described as a modern, seasonal tapas, menu items rotate three, sometimes four times a week depending on the availability of the fresh seasonal ingredients.





# ARTICLES |||||

## TEXAS MONTHLY | 10 BEST NEW RESTAURANTS

PATRICIA SHARPE

March 2014



2.

## CASA RUBIA

**INSPIRED BY THE** tidal wave of creativity pouring out of Spain over the past decade, chef Omar Flores has taken that country's abundance of ingredients and ideas and given them a radical yet reverential twist. The results are electrifying, with flavors so complex that you find yourself pausing mid-bite to ponder what is going on. One such dish is his crispy fried artichokes topped with thin-sliced salt-cured tuna (above). You grab a leaf and swish it in a big, luscious dollop of yellow saffron aioli, dragging along leaves of parsley and mint. In another of my favorites, a square of black cod luxuriates in an emulsion of butter touched with chervil, the sauce pooling deliciously in the bowl. A paella variant involving noodles, cooked in a potent reduction of tomatoes and Spanish chorizo, has a wonderfully charred flavor. Couples intent on a tête-à-tête will find many obliging nooks in the spare, dark room, while the two communal tables provide inviting spots for solo diners. Do not fail to notice the leg of jamón ibérico sitting proudly on the kitchen counter, just as its porky brethren do in restaurants and markets all over Spain. *Opened November 18, 2013. 3011 Gulden Ln, Ste 116 (469-513-6349). D Mon-Sat. \$\$-\$\$\$*

▼ TEXASMONTHLY.COM

Read a story about Trinity Groves, the Dallas restaurant incubator where Casa Rubia was born.

**YOU COULD CALL IT A TIPPING POINT.** Over the past few years it's become undeniable that something big is happening in the Texas culinary world. To put it plainly, the food scene here is not just hot, it is on fire, burning at a rate that I've never seen before. Texas chefs are winning national culinary awards left and right—the James Beard Foundation named two Austin chefs as Best Chef: Southwest, in 2011 and 2012, and seven Texans have been named to Food & Wine's annual “ten best new chefs” list since 2001. In our cities, excellent new restaurants are opening so fast it's impossible to keep up with them. Scores of local culinary celebrations are springing up not only to extol the likes of whole-beast cookery but also to benefit hardworking farmers. Meanwhile, national food festival planners, seeing how much fun we're having, are starting up Texas editions. Television megastars like Anthony Bourdain of *Parts Unknown* and Andrew Zimmern of *Bizarre Foods*, not to mention professional shuttlers like Adam Richman of *Man v. Food*, can't stay away. Every other week, the *New York Times* seems to run another travel story trumpeting the culinary attractions of our cities. ¶ In short, the country has discovered what we Texans already know: as much as we love our brisket and cheese enchiladas and chicken-fried steaks, they no longer solely define us. Our not-so-humble state has one of the richest, most diverse, and most electrifying food scenes in the country. ¶ This month we are rolling out the thirteenth edition of “Where to Eat Now.” Typically, this annual roundup focuses exclusively on our list of the state's best new restaurants. But when we started thinking about this edition, that seemed too narrow a focus. So we branched out. Because man cannot live by food alone, we delved into key liquid assets—craft cocktails, Texas wine, and local beer—to tell you where and what to drink now. Over the past few years, a revolution in meat production has taken place, exemplified by the heritage pork butchery at Houston's Revival Market, so we also sampled the state's charcuterie. Because Houston is our most deliciously diverse city, we compiled a list of the quintessential local dishes. And down in San Antonio, we lifted the lid on the pots bubbling away at the Culinary Institute of America, where a Latin-oriented curriculum is transforming what would-be chefs learn in school. ¶ All this tasty activity provides a sumptuous background for the main attraction: the ten best new restaurants in Texas. Grab a table and get ready for a treat. The eating has never been better.

by Patricia Sharpe



## D MAGAZINE | RESTAURANT REVIEW

NANCY NICHOLS

April 2014



*You leave Casa Rubia with  
a diversity of exotic tastes dancing around  
in your mouth.*

wouldn't have been able to tell you about the Torta del Casar, a decadent cheese made from the milk of Merino and Entrefina sheep. The curds and whey are separated by cardamon thistle rather than an animal-based rennet. Break open the soft rind, and watch the thick, creamy cheese ooze across the plate. Wipe it up with a chunk of toasty grilled sourdough, and order another glass of sherry.

Casa Rubia's approach to high-in-style small plates reminds me of those created by Brian Zenner at Belly & Trumpet. Both menus offer less-than-full portions of intense and sometimes complex items similar to those found on expensive chef's tasting menus. Neither restaurant falls into the average price category. The "complex plates" at Casa Rubia run from \$12 to \$17, but the quality and variety of flavors are worth every dime. And you

leave with a diversity of exotic tastes dancing around in your mouth.

White anchovies braided down the center of a small casserole dish are garnished with roasted, julienned red and yellow peppers and a few dime-size croutons. The peppers added a sweet note to the brininess of the fish, which was moist and subtly flavorful. The crisp crunch of the tiny croutons provided the contrast in texture needed to make the dish memorable. The pâté de conejo is brilliant. A scoop of rabbit pâté arrived on a large, round cross section of wood accompanied by a dollop of smoked pear butter, cornichons, and pickled beets and turnips. Again, the briny pickles and vegetables provided flavor and textural contrast to the smooth, rich rabbit. Instead of overwhelming the delicate pâté, the pear butter was a spot-on complement,

its subtle smokiness and slight sweetness playing off the natural bitterness of the liver in the pâté.

One evening the paella, which changes often, was made with chicken and lamb. Just before placing the large container of flavorful rice on the table, our waiter presented each of us with a warmed plate. The paella pan was filled with bits of tender and crispy lamb and rolls of supple chicken, all topped with jewel-like pomegranate seeds.

On another visit, the seasoned diners who accompanied me let loose screams of joy. I've never been so happy to have so many small

KEVIN MAFFLE



**MODERN LOVE:**  
(clockwise from  
far left) mussels,  
sour orange, sher-  
ry, and trout roe;  
rabbit pate; and  
Jonn Baudoin

plates on a table. We couldn't rotate them fast enough. Berkshire pork jowl resembled thick slabs of soft, salty ham, which were complemented with pickled cabbage and charred kumquat, and topped with shavings of grated rye bread. Fried baby artichokes mixed with almost invisible bits of salty tuna (mojama) encircled a pool of saffron aioli. The dish sprang to life with hints of fresh mint and a gentle whack of chile oil.

Another not to miss: chopped maitake mushrooms on a pool of warm Idiazabal cheese sauce topped with a farm-fresh egg. Once you slash through it with a knife and fork, you are left with an unofficial version of fondue: a rich, almost sweet and smoky mash-up of flavors.

The wine list is all Spanish, offering 14 sherries by the glass, with a nice selection of styles, including fino, manzanilla, oloroso, and sweet Pedro Ximénez dessert sherry. And the bar turns out a mean Manhattan.

Servers have been trained well, and all of my meals were paced expertly. The only dis-

## MORE TRINITY GROVES REVIEWS

NEXT PAGE

appointment arrived in the form of dessert. Each component of a Texas goat cheesecake topped with a scoop of Ruby Red grapefruit sorbet would have been fine served solo. Together they were a mixed message of flavors and textures. However, the chocolate cremoso is a bowl of decadent sin. Rich dark chocolate ganache was scattered with bits of meringue, pomegranate seeds, sweet satsuma marmalade, and pistachios.

Everything about Casa Rubia is inviting but not fancy. Even the seating along the banquette at the window leaves you close enough that your neighbors may, as ours did, lean over with questions, but not so close that you feel like you're hemmed in too tightly. Like most restaurants these days, the decibel level is high.

I just hope that by the time you read this they have added additional seating on the patio. It might be the only way to snag a reservation. **D**

WRITE TO NANCYN@DMAGAZINE.COM.





## PEGASUS NEWS - CASA RUBIA BRINGS SPANISH TAPAS TO TRINITY GROVES — AND IT'S OPEN NOW

BY TINEY RICCIARDI

*Posted November 18, 2013*



WEST DALLAS — Food offerings in the Trinity Groves neighborhood of West Dallas are becoming more diverse by the day. Casa Rubia, a Spanish tapas restaurant, joins Souk and LUCK as the newest in a wave of recent restaurant openings at the base of the Margaret Hunt Hill bridge in West Dallas. Casa Rubia begins dinner service Monday, November 18.

For his second entrepreneurial venture, Driftwood owner Jonn Baudoin wanted to fill a void in Dallas' culinary scene with authentic Spanish fare, he told us back in July. Casa Rubia's menu of small plates sticks closely to traditional Spanish offerings like jamon serrano and jamon iberico. More creative dishes focus heavily on seasonal ingredients, such as seafood. One glance at the menu shows a variety of proteins including rabbit leg, mussels, trout, octopus and quail.

The restaurant also features a daily paella — made to order, from scratch — that will feed four or more people. [View the full menu below.](#)

Driftwood's executive chef Omar Flores will be heading the Casa Rubia kitchen in addition to his managerial duties at Driftwood. Baudoin previously told Pegasus News chefs will use modern cooking techniques to bolster the authentic fare.

"Trinity Groves is a great opportunity for Jonn and I to showcase our spin on classic Catalonia tapas," Flores said in a press release.

As far as libations, the restaurant will serve strictly Spanish wine and beer, as well as a large selection of sherry. Wines cost \$28-120 per bottle, with some available by the glass (\$7-10). There's word of a Spanish cocktail menu, too, though we have yet to see the list.

Casa Rubia will be open for dinner 5-10 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and 5-11 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays. The restaurant is closed Sundays. Casa Rubia is located at 3011 Gulden Lane, Suite 116. It's next door to Souk.



## FD | LUXE - FIRESTARTERS THE SEQUEL

LESLIE BRENNER

August 2013



Jon 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.

LESLIE BRENNER is the restaurant critic and dining editor for The Dallas Morning News. Reach her at [lbrenner@dallasnews.com](mailto:lbrenner@dallasnews.com), [twitter.com/lesbren](https://twitter.com/lesbren) or [facebook.com/leslie.brenner](https://facebook.com/leslie.brenner).







## GUIDE - SEAFOOD SPECTACULAR

BY LESLIE BRENNER

Published: June 19, 2013

Updated: October 23, 2013



In the last couple of years, Dallas has fallen head-over-heels in love with seafood. In the past 15 months, five significant seafood restaurants have debuted here — including three so impressive they've made it onto this list of best seafood restaurants in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

Our love of seafood extends further than dining rooms dedicated to fish. The general quality of seafood we're finding in all kinds of restaurants has improved immensely, with much more variety than ever before. Remember when it was hard to find places offering more than just scallops, farmed salmon and maybe overfished Chilean sea bass? Now you find incredible selections of North Atlantic oysters in casual French bistros, charred octopus in laid-back gastropubs, wild salmon at the height of its season in all kinds of spots from Bishop Arts to Plano to Fort Worth.

And what you find in dedicated seafood restaurants can be even more remarkable.

Two of the newcomers are in a different league from the others on this list: Driftwood and Spoon Bar and Kitchen. Far more ambitious than the others, they're both chef-driven, featuring incredibly creative and forward-looking takes on the greatest treats our oceans have to offer. Not only are they far and away the best seafood restaurants in Dallas; they're two of the best restaurants in Dallas.

Do we have room to grow? Is there room for more ambitious, creative, interesting seafood spots? Certainly. A number of the restaurants on this list keep it very simple, and do their thing well, but I'd love to see more invention, and it wouldn't surprise me if we do before very long.

Surely you have your own favorite spots for fish. Please read the instructions at the end of this story to learn how to tell us about them.

In the meantime, I'm thrilled to present, in alphabetical order, The Best in DFW: Seafood Restaurants.



"Our goal is to be the best seafood house in Dallas." That's what Driftwood owner Jonn Baudoin told me last June, a couple of months after he opened his breezy Oak Cliff restaurant with chef Omar Flores in charge of the kitchen. Well, mission accomplished. Flores' cooking, impressive from the start, has absolutely taken off; his plates are stunning. Dinner might start with a tartare of yellowtail dressed up with kumquat and a hit of Serrano chile, topped with avocado-lime ice cream. Alaskan halibut, beautifully seared and served on a vivid ramp pistou with fava beans, fiddlehead ferns, baby shiitake mushrooms and a silken smoked potato purée, makes a splendid main course. If soft shell crabs or King salmon are in season, Flores no doubt has something wonderful planned for them, too. Then they'll be gone, replaced by whatever catches Flores' fancy next. Driftwood's plates are formal, yet not fussy, with prices that are gentle for cooking of this caliber. 642 W. Davis St., Dallas. 214-942-2530. driftwood-dallas.com.

# 2013 TO WATCH

## THE NEW CREATIVE CLASS

*They have wildly different talents and utterly different perspectives. The one thing these Dallasites have in common? They are the future. The agents of change. The new provocateurs.*

*FD Luxe editors and contributors make the case*

portraits by MEI-CHUN JAU



### DIG IN

52 **GIFTS** Highly creative, cost no object, unattainably attainable

62 **FASHION** *Pas. Pirouette*. Dancers from the Texas Ballet Theater, untethered, in the season's most decadent outerwear and accessories

72 **ARCHITECTURE** Perot Museum architect Thom Mayne, at home

86 **PROFILES** The new creatives: The 13 to watch in 2013



### THE TASTEMAKER Omar Flores

His stock in trade may be halibut cheeks and octopus tentacles, but Omar Flores, executive chef at Driftwood, the terrific little Oak Cliff seafood restaurant, has talent that goes way beyond fish. Superb handmade pasta, bacon-wrapped rabbit loin, crisp-skinned milk-poached chicken, vegetable garnishes that rock, even swoon-worthy desserts — Flores turns them all out with creativity, technical mastery and style. In this, his first-ever executive chef position, the 32-year-old earned a spot on *The Dallas Morning News* best-chefs list this year, as well as a four-star review. He's one of the most promising young culinary artists to emerge on the Dallas scene in some time.

—Leslie Brenner

## DALLAS MORNING NEWS - DAZZLING DEBUTS

BY LESLIE BRENNER

Published: December 28, 2012

It's been a crazy, tumultuous year in Dallas dining. Wonderful restaurants closed: Nana, Craft Dallas and Screen Door. Talented chefs and restaurateurs unexpectedly abandoned their posts: André Natera (the Pyramid Restaurant), Jeffery Hobbs (Sissy's Southern Kitchen and Cocktails), Monica Greene (Monica's Nueva Cocina), Colleen O'Hare and Jeana Johnson (Acme F&B). And a slew of terrific restaurants opened. In fact, it started to look like choosing a Restaurant of the Year for 2012 would be a daunting task. On the one hand, we had Oak - the beautiful Design District establishment from Tommy DeAlano and Richard and Tiffanee Ellman that opened last year, too late to be considered for The Best in DFW: New Restaurants of 2011. And then we had Driftwood, the wonderful seafood spot Jonn Baudoin opened in Oak Cliff in the spring. In October, Matt McCallister introduced FT33, just around the corner from Oak, completely shaking things up. November brought Stephan Pyles' new Stampede 66 and John Tesar's Spoon, neither of which could be counted out. All in all, it has been an exceptional year - what a group of outstanding debuts! But in the end, the choice for Restaurant of the Year was clear: FT33 is the most impressive debut not just of this year, but of the last two years. Read on to find out what makes it so exciting. The other top newcomers are listed in alphabetical order. We're guessing you have your own favorite restaurants that opened in 2012, and we'd certainly love to hear about them.

**Driftwood**

**With the debut of their lovely Oak Cliff dining room in the spring, chef Omar Flores and owner Jonn Baudoin focused on seafood in a way heretofore unseen in Dallas. How? By featuring the most fabulous seafood the country has to offer at any given moment in terrifically creative iterations. Flores' crudos are lively, his oysters are dreamy, his specials are hard to resist, like whelks jazzed up with kaffir lime and ginger and served in their shells, or house-made black-pepper linguini bathed in uni (sea urchin roe) and topped with halibut cheeks. With smart, sophisticated garnishes - a modern barigoule with silky wild salmon, sautéed speckled butter beans with sparkling fresh gulf shrimp - his dynamic menu dares to be different. Flores has as much delicious fun with rabbit or duck as he does with halibut cheeks, and his desserts, like an almond-blueberry buckle with sour cherry-brown butter sauce, are among the best in town. All this at fairly reasonable prices. 642 W. Davis St., Dallas. 214-942-2530. driftwood-dallas.com.**

**Oak**

This Design District restaurant may be the most soothingly beautiful dining room around, and its chef, Jason Maddy, is one of Dallas' most talented. I loved Oak when it opened late last year, and as it evolves, it gets even better. The cooking is fairly formal, with Austrian, French and Spanish touches. Maddy's vegetable terrines are spectacular, he does one of the best foie gras torchons around and his charcuterie is superb. His roasted duck breast served over Puy lentils, with foie-gras-enriched Burgundy wine sauce, was one of the most memorable dishes of the year, as was pink snapper with sweet little Manila clams, celery and a suave bouillabaisse sauce. Oak's service

is gracious, professional and warm, and the desserts, courtesy of pastry chef Sarah Greene, are elegant and appealing. 1628 Oak Lawn Ave., Dallas. 214-712-9700. oakdallas.com.

Sissy's Southern Kitchen and Bar  
The Henderson Avenue spot Lisa Garza opened last

February, has a fried chicken bucket that is particularly popular. The dishes are often helped by the left the same flavor of fun, but flavorfully, they are a vibrant and definitely N. Henderson Kitchen.

Spoon  
While the Center in early marks of the, ished, an ambience where the Crete sparkling truffle, the ster se chef Dr. ter Dr. com.

Stampede 66  
One of the Stephens Texas, delicious town, the refer Pyles' in the '90's, Moody cowboy imagery from famous Texans trail across giant yachts, mad-scientist margaritas are mixed with heart, and Texas red chili, canned in-house, is served at the table. With a wild roster of terrific tacos, irresistible fried chicken, cowboy-style hanger steak on flannel hash and more, there's something for everyone - tourists, gastronomes, scenesters, and yes, secessionists. 1717 McKinney Ave. (entrance and valet on North Akard Street), Dallas. 214-550-6966. stampede66.com.

**The Tried and True**

Why did Nick Badovinus close Neighborhood Services Tavern, one of the best spots on Henderson, earlier this year? Who knows. But I'm thrilled he did, for in its place, he opened the Tried and True, dedicated to the worship of Kentucky bourbons. If you don't know which to try, flights of three make a great introduction. Campy beer lights, a suspended motorcycle, a pool table, a giant neon bingo sign and dart boards serve as decor. As for eats, a trio of fabulous artisanal country hams pair brilliantly with the bourbons, as do chicharrones. There are also a splendid burger, briny-good oysters on the half-shell, craveworthy fish and chips and the like. Warning: Loud live music on the weekends can make conversation impossible. 2405 N. Henderson Ave., Dallas. 214-827-2405. neighborhoodservicesdallas.wordpress.com.

**Woodshed Smokehouse**

Tim Love scored big with his sprawling place on the banks of the Trinity River in Fort Worth featuring all manner of things smoked. The traditional barbecue - oak-smoked beef ribs and pecan-smoked pork ribs - is fabulous, and the hickory-smoked sausage, which changes daily (love the duck!), can be lip-smackingly good, too. Don't miss the freshly griddled, house-made corn tortillas with a pot of "pit master fat," unless your physician forbids it. There are some wonderful salads (shaved fennel, Bosc pear and crumbled cauliflower or kale with guanciale and Manchego) to

start, but not everything impresses. Still, on a balmy day, after a long walk along the Trinity, kicked back with Woodshed's 'cue and a plastic cup full of Texas craft beer, I can't think of anyplace I'd rather be. 3201 Riverfront Drive, Fort Worth. 817-877-4545. woodshedsmokehouse.com.

**Driftwood**

With the debut of their lovely Oak Cliff dining room in the spring, chef Omar Flores and owner Jonn Baudoin focused on seafood in a way heretofore unseen in Dallas. How? By featuring the most fabulous seafood the country has to offer at any given moment in terrifically creative iterations. Flores' crudos are lively, his oysters are dreamy, his specials are hard to resist, like whelks jazzed up with kaffir lime and ginger and served in their shells, or house-made black-pepper linguini bathed in uni (sea urchin roe) and topped with halibut cheeks. With smart, sophisticated garnishes - a modern barigoule with silky wild salmon, sautéed speckled butter beans with sparkling fresh gulf shrimp - his dynamic menu dares to be different. Flores has as much delicious fun with rabbit or duck as he does with halibut cheeks, and his desserts, like an almond-blueberry buckle with sour cherry-brown butter sauce, are among the best in town. All this at fairly reasonable prices. 642 W. Davis St., Dallas. 214-942-2530.

driftwood-dallas.com

d modern, to toque at some of the chefs. The the ingredient. With her recent the center, local new takes might gentle chile marriages are onic, mod- ever trump to be gor- what kind ting at the oin served hicken bal- abbage, or of the rust- ct keeping red, formal ut. General a world of exquisitely eans is the and things use, which ay, FT33 is out of the an exciting 1-741-2629.

and Barrel Fine Food rgers Cook Southern Diner The nean Hop-

goddy Burger Bar Hypnotic Sushi Jacks Southern Comfort Food Kinado Sushi and Bar Manuel's Creative Cuisine Max's Wine Dive Monica's Nueva Cocina Nick and Sam's Grill Park Cities Nora Nosh Euro Bistro Plano Ocho Kitchen + Cocktails Park Tavern Pepper Smash - A Cocktail Kitchen (Plano) Pera Turkish Kitchen Qariah Lebanese Restaurant and Lounge Rock and Roll Tacos Rosemont Sakhuu Thai Cuisine Ser Sisu The Standard Pour Start Sundown at Granada TJ's Seafood Market and Grill T/X Union Bear Urban Rio Cantina and Grill (Plano) Wicked PoBoys CLOSINGS Bolla Campo Modern Country Bistro Craft Dallas The Commissary Kathleen's Sky Diner L'Ancestral (will close after New Year's Eve) Matador Tapas Nana Screen Door Sutra OPENED AND CLOSED Snack Global Kitchen and Bar TELL US YOUR PICKS We'd love to hear your choices for the best new restaurants to open in the D-FW area in 2012. Go to eatsblog.dallasnews.com, look for the Best in DFW: New Restaurants of 2012 post and tell us in a comment. Or send an email, including your full (real) name and city of residence, to lbrenner@dallasnews.com. We'll publish highlights, focusing on establishments not included in this list, in the Jan. 11 issue of Guide. OTHER BEST IN DFW CHOICES Log on to dallasnews.com/bestindfw to see other categories, including Chefs, Tex-Mex and Mexican, Burgers and more. ONLINE Find more year-in-review stories at dallasnews.com/2012inreview.



## DALLAS MORNING NEWS - DRIFTWOOD CHEF HOOKS DINERS WITH HIS FRESH APPROACH TO FISH

BY EDEN STIFFMAN

Published: November 11, 2012



**DINING Q&A**

### Driftwood chef hooks diners with his fresh approach to fish

By EDEN STIFFMAN  
Staff Writer  
estiffman@dallasnews.com

Omar Flores, a newcomer to this year's list of Best in DFW: Chefs, is in charge of the kitchen at Oak Cliff's Driftwood restaurant. Just two months into his first executive position, the El Paso native, 32, drew a four-star review from *The Dallas Morning News*.

Flores was raised in the kitchen: His father was the chef at several Mexican restaurants in El Paso, and for a time the family owned a restaurant in Chicago.

Before opening Driftwood in April, he was a chef at Abacus, Kent Rathbun's high-toned Knox-Henderson restaurant; for his last three years, he served as Abacus' executive sous-chef.

At Driftwood, not only is Flores responsible for the savory side of the menu, but he also turns out desserts that restaurant critic Leslie Brenner called "sophisticated enough to be served in the swankiest white-tablecloth joint in town."

Flores sat down to chat with *The Dallas Morning News* about

how the seasons inspire his seafood-centric menu, the fishy text messages he wakes up to each morning and the three ingredients he can't live without.

**You grew up in a family of cooks. How has that shaped the way you think about food?**

I grew up in my dad's restaurants, so I grew up eating really good food. As a kid, I never had Lunchables. I always had a homemade meal every single day for lunch.

See **DINERS** Page 6E

Omar Flores, a newcomer to this year's list of Best in DFW: Chefs, is in charge of the kitchen at Oak Cliff's Driftwood restaurant. Just two months into his first executive position, the El Paso native, 32, drew a four-star review from *The Dallas Morning News*.

Flores was raised in the kitchen: His father was the chef at several Mexican restaurants in El Paso, and for a time the family owned a restaurant in Chicago. Before opening Driftwood in April, he was a chef at Abacus, Kent Rathbun's high-toned Knox-Henderson restaurant; for his last three years, he served as Abacus' executive sous-chef.

At Driftwood, not only is Flores responsible for the savory side of the menu, but he also turns out desserts that restaurant critic Leslie Brenner called "sophisticated enough to be served in the swankiest white-tablecloth joint in town."

Flores sat down to chat with *The Dallas Morning News* about how the seasons inspire his seafood-centric menu, the fishy text messages he wakes up to each morning and the three ingredients he can't live without.

**You grew up in a family of cooks. How has that shaped the way you think about food?**

I grew up in my dad's restaurants, so I grew up eating really good food. As a kid, I never had Lunchables. I always had a homemade meal every single day for lunch.

I wasn't necessarily cooking, but I was always in the kitchen. I watched my parents cook and watched their technique. I'm a real visual person. If I see something, then I can pick it up really quickly. I had a real knack for it. There are very few things I'm good at, but cooking is one of them.

### **Do you cook any of your parents' dishes now?**

My mom passed away two years ago. She always made the best enchiladas. And not like Tex-Mex, where they put that crappy canned sauce and ground beef on top, and yellow cheese. That's all you find here in Dallas - it drives me crazy. Hers were really authentic, with slow-roasted chicken and real New Mexico red chile sauce and scallions on top. So that's one of the dishes that reminds me of home, and I make it for myself every once in a while.

### **After studying hotel and restaurant management at New Mexico State University, you went to the Culinary Institute of America. What kind of an education did you get in New York?**

The school just trains you on the basics: how to sauté, how to grill. Creativity comes outside of work. I spent most weekends going down to the city. Once I graduated, I ended up staying there for another year, working almost for free the whole time. I got exposed to a lot out there. New York is just one of those great food cities, where people experiment with food. They're not afraid to try something new.

### **Were there New York chefs or restaurants who particularly influenced you?**

One guy who really inspired me was Eric Ripert, who owns Le Bernardin. And Michael White. He owns Marea. Eating at both of those places, they were just phenomenal - probably some of the best meals I've had in my life. Their menus are about 95 to 98 percent seafood. It's amazing what they do with it. It's so fresh, and it's so perishable. And I think it's something a lot of restaurants in Dallas don't do. Because if you don't sell it, it goes to waste.

### **How was the transition back to Texas in 2006?**

Let's be honest: Texas is a steak state. It's meat and potatoes and all that.

I got the job at Abacus, right there in Park Cities. Most of the clientele, they've been eating the same stuff for however long they've lived there. They don't really move out of their bubble.

When I was executive sous chef, I tried to bring in a lot of fresh fish, but people just were not having it. It got to the point where I felt like I was almost just working at a steakhouse.

## (CONT'D) DALLAS MORNING NEWS - DRIFTWOOD CHEF HOOKS DINERS WITH HIS FRESH APPROACH TO FISH

BY EDEN STIFFMAN

Published: November 11, 2012



### ***What new aesthetic does Driftwood bring to Dallas?***

I think we're a little edgy for Dallas. Not to say seafood's edgy, because it's not. We're not necessarily reinventing the wheel or anything. We're just not doing the norm - the shellfish platters, crab-crusted tilapia, crab cakes - the real cliché stuff.

I've educated my staff, so they educate customers. They know that we have a really limited amount of seafood in house every day. When we run out, we run out. Some people can't understand that. We had X amount of orders, and now it's gone. To me, you can't really trust a seafood restaurant that doesn't run out of seafood.

### ***Are there challenges in sourcing seafood in a landlocked place?***

It's actually not that difficult. I get fresh fish from Hawaii. I get fresh fish from Alaska and from Boston. It's literally overnighted. And all these vendors, they're hungry. I can't even tell you how many texts I get every single morning around 7 or 8 a.m. from people just wanting to sell me stuff. Like, "Hey, this is what I've got. This is what's fresh." So it's great! I don't even have to work that hard at it.

### ***What inspires your menus?***

Seasonal produce is one of those things I think is really important to tie in with seafood. I feel like a lot of restaurants serve just fish on a plate with sauce. To me, a proper plate is a composed dish, with the proper garnishes, that'll elevate the flavor of the fish.

Even fish are seasonal sometimes. Florida crab claw season started this week. Next month is Nantucket Bay scallop season. We just rolled out our fall menu. We're using sunchokes, squashes, pomegranates. Right now I'm doing a hali-but cheek with smoked potato chowder. It's got bacon, potatoes. Not necessarily heavier, but a little heartier.

### ***What ingredients could you not do without?***

Definitely butter and salt. A high-fat, rich butter, like Plugrá, is always the best. For salt, fleur de sel. It's considered the caviar of sea salts. It's kind of crunchy and has that ocean flavor to it. And I'm really big on acidity. So either citrus or vinegar - one of those two. Almost all of my sauces or almost anything I prepare has some kind of citrus. If those three ingredients are there, you can make anything taste good.

### ***Why do you make your own pastries?***

They discussed buying desserts, having somebody else do it. But to me, a restaurant should have everything made from scratch. I'm not a pastry guy. I do what I know and I try not to get too elaborate. I have a seasonal pumpkin brûlée on the menu right now. And a sticky toffee cake with an apple-bourbon ice cream. I'm also doing a chocolate terrine with pistachios and a coconut gelato. We sell an absurd amount of desserts. I've never worked in a restaurant where we sell so many desserts. The only thing we don't do here is make our own bread. In the new year, I might actually look into making our own bread, too.

PHOTO(S): (Mona Reeder/Staff Photographer) Chef Omar Flores is trying to lure diners in Dallas, known as a steak town, with fish at Driftwood in Oak Cliff.

(c) Copyright, 2012, The Dallas Morning News

## DALLAS MORNING NEWS - HAIL TO THE CHEFS

BY LESLIE BRENNER

Published: October 12, 2012

One cooks in a laid-back smokehouse attached to a groovy midcentury modern motel-ish hotel. Another turns out polished yet soulful plates at a sceney hot spot. A third works his magic on buckwheat flour and *recherché* Japanese seafood in what feels like a Zen retreat. This year's selection of the best chefs in Dallas-Fort Worth, which includes three first-timers, certainly covers a wide range of styles. All together they represent the most accomplished and inspired cooking in a city that continues its culinary ascendancy.

And yes, all 11 chefs are in one city - Dallas - despite the geographic spread of the endeavor. That four of them head up kitchens in Oak Cliff testifies to that district's growing influence as a gastronomic sizzle zone. In order to make the list, a chef must currently be in charge of a restaurant and responsible for creating the dishes. Beyond that, he or she must be creative, original and exacting, with a kitchen that runs smoothly and menus that change with the seasons and the chef's flights of fancy. Consistent execution is important, too.

This year, our chefs have in common an uncanny ability to express themselves on the plate: Each brings tremendous individual personality to the table.

Naturally, we would love to hear your own choices for the best chefs in D-FW. Please turn to Page 29 to learn how to tell us.

Here, in alphabetical order, are The Best in DFW: Chefs.

**Tim Byres - Smoke**  
Three years after the Oak Cliff restaurant opened, Byres has achieved a happy balance between the simpler (yet wonderful) barbecue dishes on the menu, like snappy sausages in three animal flavors, and his consistently outstanding cheffier dishes. Newish on the menu, one that mingles plump pieces of grilled quail with smoky jalapeños, turnip greens, chickpeas and a smooch of harissa, topped with a brilliant salad of parsley, cilantro and mint, is stunningly good. And Byres' pit-roasted cabrito (baby goat) enveloped in a flying saucer of masa and complemented with green apple salsa verde and goat's milk cajeta is one of the city's most original and crave-worthy dishes.  
The Belmont Hotel, 901 Fort Worth Ave., Dallas. 214-393-4141. [smokerestaurant.com](http://smokerestaurant.com).

**Bruno Davailon - The Mansion Restaurant**  
Engaged, elegant, pitch-perfect as ever, Davailon's cooking remains some of the city's absolute best, even if the chef doesn't seem to take the risks he once did at the Mansion. Who's to argue with a summer corn soup cradling a perfectly poached egg, tender morsels of lobster mushrooms and sweet bits of candied chorizo? He can wow with richness, as in a foie gras custard layered with charred corn and Parmesan foam, or bowl you over with purity of flavor, as in slices of Wagyu strip with dreamy duck-fat fries, puréed daikon and a tomato-béarnaise reduction. If you're craving pheasant, Davailon's your man. Lately he serves it with a wonderfully smoky charred eggplant purée, silken matsutake mushrooms and a beautiful foie gras-miso sauce.  
2821 Turtle Creek Blvd. (entrance on Gillespie Street),

Dallas. 214-443-4747. [mansiononturtlecreek.com](http://mansiononturtlecreek.com).

**Tiffany Derry - Private Social**

You might suspect that a sceney Uptown spot could let quality slide a bit after a noteworthy debut, but a year after Private Social opened, Derry's exuberant cooking is better than ever. The Top Chef star has hung on to some favorites (duck-fat-fried chicken!). But she keeps things fresh with new dishes that are as sophisticated as they are soulful, such as suckling pig stuffed with boudinlike house-made sausage, garnished with yarnlike strands of fried pig's ear. She jazzes up tender slices of "Peking style" duck breast splayed over glass noodles with duck confit, and sets almost-rare slices of Australian lamb loin atop a mound of purple-hull peas, pickled hon shimeji mushrooms, bits of tender lamb neck and crushed toasted pistachios. Phenomenal.  
3232 McKinney Ave., Dallas. 214-754-4744. [privatesocial.com](http://privatesocial.com).

**Omar Flores - Driftwood**

In his first gig as an executive chef, this young El Paso native is making a mighty impressive show of it at 6-month-old Driftwood. Flores (shown on the Guide cover) approaches his subject with flair and finesse, good taste and superb technique. He knows his way around an octopus tentacle.

per ing bee was gra ent

But cris alw vin city ber to Flo 642 wo

Sci Go he za me wit mu of t ele the ing tha like ad set plis 549 350

Jeff The cuis The to k bre vib sol ly c shis in t ing. He changes his menu constantly, a risky proposition to be sure, but great for frequent diners; it requires great skill and imagination. I still dream of his superb chicken dish - the crisp-skinned breast atop a sauté of English peas and fiddlehead ferns with a peppery chicken jus - that was the talk of the town last spring.  
614 W. Davis St., Dallas. 214-943-1883. [bolsadallas.com](http://bolsadallas.com).

**Jason Maddy - Oak**

The talented young chef at this wonderful 10-month-old Design District restaurant is another newcomer to the list. Maddy cooks with quiet power; his dishes

are elegant, precise and, yes, delicious. His vegetable terrines are masterful, such as a recent one fashioned from matchstick-cut carrots and banded with horseradish cream; it came surrounded by baby beets of the purest flavor (each in a dab of beet foam), graceful quarters of glazed baby turnip and soft, rich rutabaga fries. Maddy's charcuterie (tête de veau croquette, pork rillettes) is superlative, and his main courses, like pink snapper on a bouillabaisse sauce with Manila clams and celery, continue to surprise and impress.

1628 Oak Lawn Ave., Dallas. 214-712-9700. [oakdallas.com](http://oakdallas.com).

**André Natera - The Pyramid Restaurant**

The Fairmont Dallas' outstanding chef uses Asian ingredients and accents so seamlessly in his sophisticated American-slash-French dishes that it doesn't come across as fusion cooking. Sometimes it's daring, like a velvety foie gras torchon served with salty, tart, lightly spicy yuzu kosho - a paste made from yuzu (a Japanese citrus) zest, chile and salt - and apple-ponzu gelée. (Yes, it works: delightfully.) Other times it's just straight-ahead fabulous, as in lobster dumplings, tender lobster medallions and enoki mushrooms in a rich dashi broth perfumed with Thai basil and brightened with scallion. Or slices of duck breast given the Chinese five-spice treatment, set

a terrific car- g duck-confit- ard St., Dallas.

allas' five-star ings: elevating ple expression, ething entirely ourcing is key; daily. The rekerel with tiny blime take on ke buckwheat mp and tender lakes. Oh, and andmade soba 214-220-2828.

remains one of Big D, and for bout synergy - une with juicy, on crostini, or al lamb tartare enius of pasta, e with a won- orky ragu with , a gorgeously ne with herbs id slender car- only does his rgur turns out

98. [luciadallas.com](http://luciadallas.com).

I and Bar kitchen at this llage spot was vere apparent- were missing sh pace, as we lates went out

smoothly to the tables, no one yelled, and our dinner impressed from A to Z. That's a real testament to Top Chef favorite Wilcox's skill and talent. Excellent Beeman Ranch steaks slathered with foie gras butter may draw the crowds, but dishes like smoked hamachi tartare layered with sweet crabmeat and pico de gallo, set atop swirls of avocado sauce, or a rabbit tenderloin rubbed with coffee and ancho chile and served with trembly discs of chocolate panna cotta and tiny hills of pumpkin-seed powder land this chef a spot for the first time along with the rest of D-FW's best.  
33 Highland Park Village, Dallas. 214-522-6035. [marquegrill.com](http://marquegrill.com).

### Omar Flores - Driftwood

In his first gig as an executive chef, this young El Paso native is making a mighty impressive show of it at 6-month-old Driftwood. Flores (shown on the Guide cover) approaches his subject with flair and finesse, good taste and superb technique. He knows his way around an octopus tentacle (perfect char, perfectly tender) and how to speak salmon, keeping it slippery and translucent and marrying it with a beautiful barigoule that celebrates the season (that was spring). A meticulous sourcer, he divines that grapefruit and Champagne are just the flavors to enhance wild Long Island oysters.

But Flores is just as brilliant with a rabbit duo or crisp-skinned, milk-poached, silky-fleshed chicken, always with vegetable garnishes that rock. Not convinced? He also happens to turn out some of the city's best desserts, from a laid-back, almondy blueberry buckle with sour cherry-brown butter sauce to a glamorously glossy chocolate terrine. This is Flores' first inclusion in The Best in DFW: Chefs.

642 W. Davis St., Dallas. 214-942-2530.  
[driftwood-dallas.com](http://driftwood-dallas.com).





## 118 TASTE

Adventurous seafood dining is finally here. PLUS: Sundown at the Granada; Chicken Scratch; Chop House Burger; Acme F&B's pineapple upside down cake; JJ&B jams; and a girl walks into the Owner's Box.

Edited by Nancy Nichols



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  
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



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





## 190 TASTE

Tim Love goes whole hog on the banks of the Trinity. PLUS: Kenny's Italian Kitchen; Local; Natalie's Restaurant; Driftwood's Maine lobster roll; Garden District Bloody Marys; saying goodbye to Nana; and a girl walks into Double Wide.

*Edited by Nancy Nichols*



**TASTE**  
TIM LOVE  
August 2012

EAT THIS NOW

### MAINE LOBSTER ROLL

With Truffle Potato Gaufrettes

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

**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.

### 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.

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







## FOOD DRINK

## REVIEW

Hamptons-meets-Oak Cliff at Driftwood, where Chef Omar Flores caters to real seafood-loving Texans . . . . . 116

## SEA WORTHY

MARK STUERTZ  
July/August 2012

FOOD DRINK | REVIEW



GETTING THE DRIFTWOOD Grilled octopus with marble potato confit, manzanilla olives, watercress, pickled onions and smoked tomato vinaigrette. Top right: Texas peach and blueberry buckle

## Sea Worthy

A new Oak Cliff eatery swims against the tide.  
| By Mark Stuert | Photography by Jill Broussard |

When you open the door to Driftwood, the first thing that slams your nostrils is not the scent of weathered wood or memory-summoning whiffs of smoke. It's the heady funk of wharf, the kind that fumigates your snout while you wolf down a steaming cardboard serving boat of squid with a plastic fork near San Francisco's Pier 39. The marine essence isn't exactly unpleasant, but it is jarring.

Driftwood is everything you wouldn't expect from a Dallas seafood restaurant. It's innovative. The Ahi tuna crudo in yuzu-infused olive oil is topped with a

scoop of avocado ice cream, which serves as a distinctly delicate and rich palate cleanser. It's refreshing.

Driftwood is tiny. No dish on the menu is over 25 bucks. The servers wear plaid. Cream and aquamarine play off of hanging driftwood sculptures with elements absconded from White Rock Lake and other local waterways.

And Driftwood's meat ain't red. Dallas has a hard time shaking steak. That's why most Dallas seafood restaurants are little more than a school of token fins and claws swimming in a steakhouse tidepool: dark grainy woods, bloated wine lists, white cloth-topped tables, prices that crater your Visa card and a healthy selection of steer loins to save the locals from panic fits.



### Driftwood

642 W. Davis St.  
214.942.2530  
driftwood-dallas.com  
Tue.-Sat. 5PM-Midnight

### Full Monty Cowboys

Naked Cowboy Oysters with Champagne bubbles and Rio Red grapefruit mignonette take traditional herding to another dimension.

### Seawall

Starfish. Sand dollars. Sea urchins. Conch. Clams. A collage of seashells covers the upper wall corner near the front door of the restaurant. Driftwood owner Jonn Baudoin acquired the shells by the bucketful from a Design District antique store before unleashing the screws and glue.

### Fire Pit

Armed with a fireplace, Driftwood's enclosed patio features ductwork that blasts a stream of cool to fight the Dallas torrid season.

## (CONT'D) SEA WORTHY

MARK STUERTZ  
July/August 2012

### SURF-TO-TABLE

Clockwise from top left: Duo of rabbit with root vegetables and natural jus; a driftwood sculpture created by the owner is a focal point of décor; octopus carpaccio with fava bean vinaigrette; grilled Gulf shrimp with speckled butter beans and lobster froth

Driftwood will have none of this. Sure, it has meat. But it will never be what you expect. Duo of rabbit is hare loins swaddled in Nueske bacon. There's decadent, oven-roasted bone marrow with peekytoe crab, and rumors of beef tongue ravioli with halibut cheeks. Hell, if you're going to do a twisted surf and turf, you may as well put the tongue where it belongs.

Driftwood founder Jonn Baudoin says his offbeat approach to seafood was inspired by the faux-ness of most seafood eateries in Dallas. "I wanted to do something unique," he says. "I wanted to do a seafood restaurant, but do an actual seafood restaurant. Most of the seafood restaurants are mostly steak." Actual seafood this is.

Baudoin has good pedigree. Born in Lafayette, La., he grew up experimenting with family gumbo recipes among other things, though his forte is operations. He was part of the original team that opened *Salve!*, the vaunted (for a short time) house of authentic Northern Italian fare that featured (for a short time) celebrated chef Sharon Hage. He also did stints at *Mi Piaci* and *Modo Mio*. "I can cook really good on my days off," he boasts.

For Driftwood, he sketched out his menu vision and then auditioned chefs to see who could compose the most inspiring riffs from it. Chef Omar Flores, the seasoned executive sous chef at *Abacus*, got the nod. Flores aims to expand the Dallas sea-foodie mind. "I want to stay away from crab cakes and crusted Gulf tilapia," he says.

That he does. Alaskan king crab ravioli flashes a black gloss as striking as Ferrari paint. Tinted with squid ink, the ravioli are supple, sweet and glossed with a squid ink sauce fortified with cream and butter. He puts octopus carpaccio in a bracing Meyer lemon vinaigrette. Sliced razor thin, these lacy ovals nearly melt off the tongue.

Chargrilled octopus is a different thing altogether. Firmer. Heartier. Gently scorched tentacles (with suction cups in stark relief) are coiled around marble potato, manzanilla olives, and pickled onions surrounded by dots of smoked tomato vinaigrette, creating a rich chorus of clearly articulated flavors.

But Driftwood's most stunning dish is a 10-buck app: hickory-smoked salmon rilletes. Flores starts with chunks of house-smoked salmon, whips it in crème fraîche, lemon, Tabasco, onion and chives, and pots it in terrine jars. He tops the chilled pink paste with cubes of clarified butter to fatten the oomph. The stuff is so addictive, you'll whittle through the accompanying tower of rustic toast before your wineglass can be refilled.

Driftwood has a wine list that is brief, eclectic and punchy, with no bottle breaching the \$100 mark.



**Chef Omar Flores, the seasoned executive sous chef at *Abacus*, got the nod. Flores aims to expand the Dallas sea-foodie mind. "I want to stay away from crab cakes and crusted Gulf tilapia."**

There's a soft Arneis from Piedmont (a natural with simply prepared fish), a pinot blanc from Alsace, a sancerre—even a riesling from Israel's Carmel Winery. Yet the list seems saddled with far too much cabernet and cabernet blends. There's virtually nothing on this menu that cabernet complements and much it insults. If you're going to jettison red meat clichés, why not cut its clichéd juice accompaniment loose, too?

For dessert, there's the smashing Madagascar vanilla crème brûlée and the Texas peach buckle ringed by sour cherry sauce dots and topped with a dollop of olive oil ice cream—a savory contrast to sweet and sour.

Baudoin describes Driftwood as the Hamptons-meets-Oak Cliff. It's highly doubtful the Hamptons would ever bump into Oak Cliff, but the fantasy sure works. ■





## GuideLIVE DINING

Powered by The Dallas Morning News

DINING MOVIES MUSIC ARTS THINGS TO DO TV WHATEVER (

### Restaurant review: Driftwood dazzles with its lovely dining room, affordable menu ★★★★★

By LESLIE BRENNER

Restaurant Critic

lbrenner@dallasnews.com

Published: 27 June 2012 04:51 PM

Updated: 28 June 2012 02:52 PM

Delicate curls of thin-sliced, raw sockeye salmon belly stained a deep rosy color come with a garnish of tiny-diced jicama and kumquats. The salmon's been lightly cured with grapefruit juice and zest, beet juice and pink peppercorns, and the crudo is unexpectedly lively, silky, intense.

A tender nest of black-pepper linguine laced with ribbons of shaved asparagus, bits of Serrano ham and roasted pearl onions is topped with two lobes of sea-urchin roe. Pull up a forkful of pasta, making sure to pick up a bit of uni along the way, and taste. There's a luxurious wash of rich, oceanic flavor that can't be explained by those lobes alone. Of course: The noodles are bathed in a sauce of puréed uni, egg yolks, white wine, fish fumet. It's sea urchin bliss.

Omar Flores, chef at Driftwood, a 2 1/2-month-old seafood-focused restaurant in Oak Cliff, is bursting with well-imagined dishes like these — so much so that his menu can't even contain them. The crudo and uni pasta were recent specials.

He sautés whelks — sea snails that live in madcap, conical shells — in butter boosted with lemon grass, ginger, kaffir lime, Thai basil and chiles, finishes their sauce with white wine and fumet, tucks them back in their shells and presents them with a slash of cilantro pistou. Drag a whelk through the brilliant green pistou, raise fork to mouth and taste. You'll never crave canned escargots in garlic butter again.

But don't go looking for the whelks; that dish, too, was a special.

Fresh off an almost three-year stint running Abacus as executive sous-chef, Flores has unleashed his creativity at this small, intimate neighborhood restaurant that seems the perfect venue for his talents.

The lovely dining room has a breezy, casual, drop-by-anytime feel, done in muted blue-greens and natural woods. Striking sculptures fashioned from driftwood hang on one wall; starfish, urchins and sand dollars creep up another. A lattice of wood frames an inviting, open-air patio.

It's a dream of a neighborhood restaurant (and affordable — main courses are \$22 to \$26), brought to fruition by owner Jonn Baudoin, who also runs the dining room. Every detail (with the possible exception of the simple wooden dining chairs) feels right, including the seamless service that's warm and attentive but doesn't overreach. You might recognize Baudoin: He was general manager at Ristorante Nicola, and before that at Dallas Fish Market.

So, what about the actual menu?

Crudos and shellfish lead the parade. You might start with Naked Cowboy oysters on the half-shell; they're wild ones from Long Island, N.Y., each bathed in a zippy Rio Red grapefruit mignonette and finished with a puff of Champagne foam. All over town, chefs are dousing oysters in mignonette sauce, and rarely does it improve the oyster; here it's a happy marriage.

A hamachi crudo, thick slabs of yellowtail, dressed simply in Key lime oil, Key lime zest and olive oil and set on chunks of charred pineapple, was sent out with crushed macadamia nuts, toasted ground coconut, threads of mint and a drizzle of lime oil. The pineapple threatened to overwhelm the delicate fish; a thinner slab may have been advisable. Still, it was quite nice.

Among the main courses, I loved "tongue and cheek": tender, floppy agnolotti filled with beef tongue, topped with a carefully grilled yellowtail cheek and set off by a smooth asparagus purée. What a deliciously funny surf 'n' turf. On other plates, beautifully chargrilled octopus tentacles wound around marble potatoes, manzanilla olives and pickled onions, all set off by a lustrous smoked tomato vinaigrette; big gulf shrimp crowned with puffs of lobster froth ruled over crisp-edged polenta and a sauté of speckled butter beans and chorizo.

It's easy to ruin wild salmon on a grill, but Flores sent it out slippery and just barely translucent in the middle, perfect. The portion looked small, but the fish was so rewardingly rich it satisfied (and then some), paired with a long-stemmed artichoke crown and a warm salad of tiny-diced carrot, roasted cippolini, fava beans, green garlic and pickled ramps in a vanilla-artichoke vinaigrette: an amped-up barigoule.

Lest you be tempted to think it's all about seafood here, think again. A rabbit duo was one of the best dishes I sampled, the loin stuffed with herbs, wrapped in caulfat and cooked sous vide, then enrobed in a thin layer of bacon and crisped. The leg, for its part, was expertly confitted. And chicken poached in milk perfumed with

thyme and garlic was a super-tender, flavorful knockout, its skin beautifully crisped. It came to the table graced with a light oyster mushroom pan sauce, oyster mushrooms and farro (a nutty-flavored grain) done risotto-style.

Not everything succeeded — shrimp and ricotta-filled fried zucchini blossoms weren't quite crisp; a terrific lobster salad balanced on a cakey, sweetish bun was less charming than a straight-ahead lobster roll.

And while the one-page wine list delivers in the whites column, it could use a few more compelling light reds.

As far as sweets go, the menu offers three. Crème brûlée is made interesting by layers of orange caramel and cajeta whipped cream. Send your spoon to the bottom of the French canning jar it rides in on. Turns out it's more than interesting; it's irresistible. There's also an almond-crusted buckle bursting with Texas blueberries, set on a fat stripe of sour cherry-brown butter sauce. It's topped with a scoop of wonderful house-made ice cream with the barest whisper of olive oil. And finally, there's a dark chocolate terrine, sleek, glossy and sophisticated enough to be served in the swankiest white-tablecloth joint in town. That comes with excellent pistachio gelato. All are outstanding.

Are you sitting down? Flores serves as pastry chef, too.

"Our goal is to be the best seafood house in Texas," owner Baudoin told me recently in a phone interview.

So far, I have to say, so good.

#### **Driftwood (4-stars)**

**Price:** \$\$\$ (appetizers and salads \$8 to \$15, main courses \$22 to \$26, desserts \$7 to \$8)

**Service:** Warm and attentive, but without overreaching

**Ambience:** A lovely, intimate neighborhood spot, casual yet polished, with a breezy, seaside feel and an inviting, open-air patio.

**Location:** 642 W. Davis St., Dallas; 214-942-2530; driftwood-dallas.com

**Hours:** Tuesday-Saturday 5 to 10 p.m.

**Credit cards:** All major

**Wheelchair accessible:** Yes

**Smoking area:** None

**Alcohol:** Full bar. A one-page wine list that draws on regions around the world delivers on the white-wines side but could use a few more interesting light reds. There are plenty of choices under \$50 per bottle, and 18 (including two sakes) available by the glass as well.

Did you see something wrong in this story, or something missing? Let us know.







**Sunday**

Coupons & savings  
(Not all areas)

**\$212**

**\$16,307** last 52 weeks

### Decision time

Will Deron Williams join the Mavericks?

**SPORTSDAY, 1C**



### Rising stars

Young chefs are spicing up the Dallas restaurant scene

**ARTS & LIFE, 1E**



# The Dallas Morning News

Texas' Leading Newspaper

\$3.00

Dallas, Texas, Sunday, June 24, 2012

dallasnews.com

## Arts & Life

The Dallas Morning News

Section E

Sunday, June 24, 2012

dallasnews.com

### DINING | CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

**Beef tongue**  
agnolotti with seared halibut cheeks, asparagus purée and sauce vierge, from Driftwood



Ben Torres/Special Contributor



**Omar Flores**, formerly of Abacus, revels in the chance to create seafood dishes at Driftwood.

Ben Torres/Special Contributor

## Catch a rising star

Meet six chefs who are changing the Dallas restaurant scene

By **LESLIE BRENNER**  
Restaurant Critic  
lbrenner@dallasnews.com

**O**mar Flores. Jason Maddy. Jonathan Rivera. Michael Ehlert.

A year ago, you probably hadn't heard of any of these talented young chefs. Today they're heading some of Dallas' most talked-about restaurants.

With 36-year-old Maddy in charge of its kitchen, Oak — the quietly sexy Design District restaurant — was an instant hit, a tough reservation even before it garnered a four-star review. Maddy's cooking is refined and somewhat formal, as in slices of raw fluke fashioned into rosettes and accented with rose petals and pickled radish, or a terrine of beets and horseradish-spiked fromage blanc that's at once slippery and voluptuous. In the winter, Maddy set slices of roasted duck breast over Puy lentils and bathed it all in a rich burgundy sauce; now he's serving the magret with sunchokes, baby leeks and a foie gras flan.

There's a serious résumé behind



Eve Edelheit/Staff Photographer

See **MEET** Page 5E

Jason Maddy's refined, somewhat formal cooking has drawn diners to Oak in the Dallas Design District.



# Meet Dallas dining's new faces



## Omar Flores, 32

Executive chef at Driftwood

Also a CIA grad, Flores, a native of El Paso, spent close to three years running the kitchen at Abacus as executive sous chef. Having cultivated a great love of seafood while fishing and traveling around New England with his CIA roommate, a Gloucester native, he jumped at the chance to try out for the top toque job at Driftwood, a new seafood-centric restaurant in Oak Cliff. But you won't find fried calamari at Driftwood — more like sautéed whelks with cilantro pistou or black pepper linguine with sea urchin and shaved asparagus. Flores handles pastries himself, too.

*Driftwood, 642 W. Davis St., Dallas. 214-942-2530. driftwood-dallas.com.*

## Michael Ehler, 31

Executive chef at Campo Modern Country Bistro

After graduating from the Culinary Institute of America, Ehler worked at top kitchens in New York, including Daniel Boulud's DBGB Kitchen and Bar. Last year he moved to Dallas to open the Chesterfield downtown, where he earned a three-star review for his sophisticated dishes. At Campo, where he does double-duty as pastry chef, his cooking is more relaxed, as in pear elder-braised pork cheeks with pear mostarda. *Campo Modern Country Bistro, 1165 N. Beckley Ave., Dallas. 214-946-1308. campodallas.com.*

## Omar Flores, 32

Executive chef at Driftwood

Also a CIA grad, Flores, a native of El Paso, spent close to three years running the kitchen at Abacus as executive sous chef. Having cultivated a great love of seafood while fishing and traveling around New England with his CIA roommate, a Gloucester native, he jumped at the chance to try out for the top toque job at Driftwood, a new seafood-centric restaurant in Oak Cliff. But you won't find fried calamari at Driftwood — more like sautéed whelks with cilantro pistou or black pepper linguine with sea urchin and shaved asparagus. Flores handles pastries himself, too. *Driftwood, 642 W. Davis St., Dallas. 214-942-2530. driftwood-dallas.com.*



Brad Loper/Staff Photographer

Colleen O'Hare and Jeana Johnson are behind Acme F & B.

## Jeana Johnson, 34, and Colleen O'Hare, 38

Executive chefs and co-owners at Acme F & B

You probably know them as the chefs behind Good 2 Go Taco and Goodfriend Beer Garden and Burger House. Three-week-old Acme is the team's first fine-dining restaurant, or as they put it, "come-as-you-are fine dining." On the menu: Dungeness crab and grapefruit grain, skate wing with green garbanzos, savory cabbage and soffritto. The duo has put in place a "whole animal allocation," meaning they'll purchase, say, a whole pig, use the lesser cuts for tacos and burgers at Good 2 Go and Goodfriends, and the finer cuts at Acme.

*Acme F & B, 4900 McKinney Ave., Dallas. 214-443-0003. acmefandb.com.*



Eve Edelheit/Staff Photographer

Rhode Island monkfish at Oak

## Jason Maddy, 36

Executive chef, Oak

A native of Grants, N.M., Maddy came of culinary age in New York, where he graduated from the CIA and spent years working with renowned chef David Bouley at Danube. More recently he was chef de cuisine at the Mansion Restaurant. He's traveled extensively, and it shows in his sophisticated plates at Oak, where he cooks with imagination and flair. Dishes such as a terrine of beets and horseradish-spiked romaine, or Moroccan baby octopus with pork jowl and watermelon radish earned Maddy a four-star review in February.

*Oak, 8228 Oak Lawn Ave., Dallas. 214-712-9700. oakdallas.com.*



Ben Torres/Special Contributor

Jonathan Rivera cooks with panache, imagination and skill.

## Jonathan Rivera, 29

Chef de cuisine, Café on the Green at Four Seasons Dallas at Las Colinas

Puerto Rican-born Rivera was promoted to chef de cuisine in March, after spending the better part of three years cooking for the Four Seasons' smart dining room. Another CIA grad, Rivera spent five years in the kitchen at Four Seasons Hotel Houston before coming to Dallas. Rivera cooks with panache, imagination and skill. Dishes like "chicharrón shrimp" or seared ahi tuna topped with a warm salad of green beans, fennel, radish and orange recently garnered a four-star review for Café on the Green.

*Café on the Green, Four Seasons Resort and Club Dallas at Las Colinas, 4150 N. MacArthur Blvd., Irving. 972-717-2420. fourseasons.com/dallas.*

On Twitter: @lesbren

## Las Colinas

Café on the Green at Four Seasons Dallas at Las Colinas isn't at all a neighborhood restaurant, obviously. But while its menu certainly caters to the wishes of a steak-and-chop-demanding clientele, its new chef de cuisine, 29-year-old Rivera, cooks with enough imagination, panache and skill to bring a measure of sophisticated fun to the table along with the rack of lamb.

Dishes like seared ahi tuna topped with a warm salad of green beans, fennel, radish and orange, or "chicharrón shrimp," plump prawns coated in pork cracklings and panko and fried hot and crisp, recently earned him a four-star review. I can't help but wonder whether the Puerto Rican-born chef, who has been with the Four Seasons since November 2009, will soon want to stretch his wings; I can so easily see him heading a more personal, neighborhood restaurant.

That's pretty much what happened with Flores. The 32-year-old El Paso native, who spent five years working at Abacus — he ran the kitchen as executive sous chef for close to three years — fell in love with



Brad Loper/Staff Photographer

Pike with summer succotash and beurre blanc at Acme F & B

Driftwood will be reviewed in this coming Friday's Guide section.

DBGB Kitchen and Bar. At the Chesterfield, Ehler's baby artichokes, partridge and sautéed roulade of chicken seemed like escapes from an elegant white-tablecloth establishment.

Now, as executive chef at Campo Modern Country Bistro in Oak Cliff, his cooking is somewhat more relaxed, as in a smoked tomato and soft leek compote enriched with Cabrales blue cheese and topped with toasted almonds, with croutons for dipping. Or pear cider-braised pork cheeks served with a lovely little risotto salad and pear mostarda (a sweet Italian-style condiment). Ehler serves as pastry chef, too. I lately I loved his crepes with Texas seaches and blueberries and house-made cream cheese ice cream.

Campo's is not an ambitious menu (in fact, recently I found it a little thin), but it definitely exemplifies a kind of laid-back sophistication we're seeing more and more around Dallas — the kind of cooking you find at places like Bolsa and Cedars social. In Dallas, the serious neighborhood restaurant has finally come of age.

## Acme F & B

Almost as if to put an exclamation point on that fact, Colleen O'Hare and Jeana Johnson recently opened Acme F & B, where their American menu strays happily from the safe and mundane. You probably had heard of O'Hare and Johnson last year if you're at all plugged in to the dining scene; their Good 2 Go Taco is almost a cult following. Acme is a duo's first fine dining restaurant or, rather, as they describe it, "come-as-you-are fine dining."

If you're looking for grilled, smoked salmon, Acme's not for you. Here you'll find dishes like river herring pike with summer succotash, ate wing with a sauté of fresh green garbanzos, savory cabbage and soffritto, or "farmer's cut" meats. Farmer's? O'Hare and Johnson, who are 34 and 38 respectively, practice what they refer to as "whole animal allocation." In other words, as Johnson told me in a phone interview, they'll use a whole pig by serving the lesser cuts at Good 2 Go Taco and offer the finer cuts, as available, at Acme.





## DFW.COM DINING REVIEW

BY CARY DARLING

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



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.

