

Dallas isn't just for cowboys and oil tycoons

Dallasites are hospitable and hungry culture vultures. While the outdoors are a draw during the mild spells before triple-digit summer days, the restaurants, museums and shops take the place of natural attractions in the sprawling, landlocked city. Residents keep their heels high and their jeans dark so they are ready for any occasion, from hitting up a food truck to having a reality-TV camera run-in at a swanky bar. The opportunities for both are plentiful.

By Merritt Martin
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REFUEL

- ▶ **Lucia**, the tiny Italian eatery in Oak Cliff, may be known for its fresh pastas and handmade *salumi*, but getting a reservation for one of the 36 seats is the stuff of legend: On the first of each month, call, leave a voice mail, then wait for confirmation. Best to target one of the bar seats, available to walk-ins. Dishes are focused on seasonal ingredients and the staff on outstanding service. A meal here could easily wind up on your year-end best list. 214-948-4998; luciadallas.com
- ▶ Tre Wilcox won over *Top Chef* audiences with his boisterous laugh. Back in Dallas, he settled in at **Marquee Grill** in Highland Park Village. Despite at least three other dining areas (private booths, patio, bar), the place to be is the airy main dining room with a direct view into the open kitchen. Watching Wilcox prep your duck spring rolls or grill your filet is better live. 214-522-6035; marqueegrill.com
- ▶ At the **Dallas Farmers Market**, try the barbecue pits and steamers at Shed 2. Stop by **Pecan Lodge's** counter for crusty, tender burnt ends (smoked brisket trimmings) paired with fried okra. **La Popular's** traditional tamales are available by the dozen. Pork is a sure thing, but meat lovers shouldn't dismiss the flavor-packed bean and jalapeño tamales. 214-670-5880; dallasfarmersmarket.org
- ▶ Chef Dean Fearing made a name for himself as the father of Southwestern cuisine and because his restaurant **Fearing's** is a fine dining go-to in Big D. If the chances of a dinner run-in with Dallas dweller George W. Bush seem too intense, try Fearing's Sunday brunch. The menu exploits all of the Fearing classics (tortilla soup, the chili he created for Bill Cosby, Dr Pepper-braised short ribs), but with a morning twist. 214-922-4848; fearingsrestaurant.com
- ▶ Once newcomers tuck into their first **Good-friend** burger, they'll likely return for enough visits to eat the other nine on the menu — such as the Loretta with its bacon and onion jam. Or the P.L.O.T.'s house-made pickles. Or the Coop's mix of egg and brie. Incredible burgers and a seemingly unending beer list make this a comfortable, welcoming joint. 214-324-3335
- ▶ Many of the herbs and vegetables served at **Smoke** come from its own garden, and all the meat is smoked (or cured) on-site. The restaurant is old school but upscale, with dishes such

as (seriously) big rib, pulled whole hog, hominy casserole and potato salad. It also has decadent items like crispy veal sweetbreads with roasted figs or arugula with pesto and lemon. Vintage photos and wood features make for a cozy vibe. 214-393-4141; smokerestaurant.com

GET CULTURED

- ▶ **The Ochre House** calls itself a “small but effective 45-seat Alternative Theatre Space,” and it doesn't lie. The setting is intimate but comfortable, with as much personality as a friend's living room. Its troupe of actors has an energy and chemistry that isn't found in more traditional theater venues and that radiates into the audience. 214-826-6273; ochrehousetheater.com
- ▶ It might seem strange in a city with the Dallas Museum of Art, **Nasher Sculpture Center** and many galleries to find big-name artists in a shopping mall. Raymond Nasher (of the eponymous sculpture center) built **NorthPark Center** to display major works of art. Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol, Henry Moore and others are there and always steal the show, no matter how big the sales in the stores. Special exhibits feature international and local artists. 214-363-7441; northparkcenter.com
- ▶ Frank Campagna is a fixture in Dallas whose murals are as recognizable as his scratchy voice. But he also has made an artistic mark with Deep Ellum's **Kettle Art** gallery, which offers a quiet escape amid the entertainment district's music venues. The artists often are up-and-comers or beloved locals, and the prices are shockingly reasonable. kettleart.com

STEP OUT

- ▶ The **Granada Theater**, opened in 1946, is on a distinct high right now with live music. Opening acts often are local, and headliners include everyone from Americana legends Steve Earle to Texas gem Spoon. Next door, it includes a full-service restaurant and bar, **Sundown**. An expansive beer menu and specialty cocktails keep patrons lubricated, just in case a rock star walks in. 214-824-9933; granadatheater.com
- ▶ Spend patio time at the **Double Wide** with questionable cocktails such as the YooHoo Yeehaw (a white Russian with YooHoo), Boone's Farm Martini (complete with Pixy Stix sugar rim) and Hurritang (the Big Easy's beloved with Tang). Located at the joint of the Deep Ellum and Exposition Park neighborhoods, it takes its trailer-kitsch theme seriously. Toilets serve as patio seats, and the finest velvet art is on



display. In a venue off the patio, hear live music from country to punk played by local and touring bands. 214-887-6510; *double-wide.com*

► The **Texas Theatre**, where Lee Harvey Oswald was arrested for President Kennedy's assassination, is now run by local filmmakers of Aviation Cinemas. Sidle up to the bar for a cinematically themed cocktail, or rifle through the vinyl and spin it on the record player. The Spanish stucco gives it the air of a quaint villa. Drinks and popcorn, of course, may be taken into the theater for select first-run features and cult classics. 214-948-1546; *thetexas theatre.com*

► Amid cocktail culture's resurgence in Big D, **The People's Last Stand** puts a new spin on classic flavors: Sir Drake's Ghost made with rum, absinthe spritz and rhubarb bitters, or Le Colonial, with tequila, cilantro, lime, mint, ginger syrup and sesame oil. The core clientele is cocktail enthusiasts from young hipsters to their parents, and the patio is perfect for people-watching. 214-370-8755; *thepeopleslaststand.com*

running joke, it's Dallas. Thus, Dallas embraces happy hour. Most bars offer drink specials; many restaurants offer discounted small plates. No matter what season it is outside, at happy hour, you can usually befriend a local looking to stave off driving through crazy highway junctions for at least another hour.

INSIDER TIP

If ever there was a city in which traffic was a



By Stephen A. Masker

Meet your friends at Goodfriend: The burger restaurant's 10 unique offerings — egg-and-brie Coop, anyone? — and extensive beer list make it a popular spot.



By Stephen A. Masker

Hot seats: Italian eatery Lucia can hold only 36 diners, so for a reservation, call on the first of the month, leave a message and cross your fingers.