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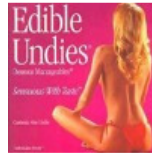


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Restaurant News

Texas Monthly Names Three Houston Restaurants as Top Picks for 2011

By Katharine Shilcutt, Fri., Jan. 21 2011 @ 9:00AM

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Texas Monthly's food editor Patricia Sharpe recognized three Houston restaurants in the latest edition of the magazine, in which she named Haven, Branch Water Tavern and Stella Sola as restaurants to watch out for in 2011.

Austin gained recognition for Uchiko and El Arbol, while Dallas, San Antonio and Fort Worth rounded out the cities with Sharpe's top picks.

In "Where To Eat Now 2011," Sharpe points out that one of the defining food trends for the last year and into this new one has been comfort food. And although the three restaurants named all feature very different interpretations of this style -- Haven with rustic Gulf Coast dining, Branch Water Tavern with cocky New American and Stella Sola with an



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Italian-Texan bent -- all three are leading purveyors of solidly-crafted "comfort cuisine" with an edge.

All three are equally known for their use of local ingredients as they are for dramatic interpretations and exciting takes on old favorites. Perhaps this is because all three restaurants share another trait in common: They're all helmed by young, talented and utterly dynamic chefs.

At Haven, Sharpe recognized Chef Randy Evans's "Texas quail with bodacious jalapeño-sausage stuffing" as well as the ever-popular shrimp corndogs that are served with "mayo spiked with Tabasco mash."

Over at Branch Water Tavern, the seafood that "hogs half the menu" was spotlighted in dishes like Chef David Grossman's seafood stew (~~although one of our favorites, the [Crazy Oyster Roast Half Shell](#), didn't get any copy~~) while Sharpe also lighted on the same dessert that was recently chosen as [one of GQ's top five desserts of 2010](#): stick toffee pudding with homemade pistachio ice cream.



Photo by Robb Walsh

The [cochon de lait at Stella Sola](#) was one of Robb Walsh's 100 Favorite Dishes last year.

Last but not least, Sharpe credited Stella Sola with having one of the best charcuterie programs in town. ([We already knew that](#), of course.) She also gave a nod to Chef Justin Basye for keeping things big and bold: "The Texan-Tuscan menu is at its robust best," she said, and "the food is never boring."



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The same could be said of Houston's dining scene as a whole: We're certainly never boring, and we're better for it.

Tags:

[Branch Water Tavern](#), [Haven](#), [Stella Sola](#)



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Clemdorfman 1 week ago

What is this comfort food you speak of?
Or 'comfort cuisine', as only Texas Monthly could write.

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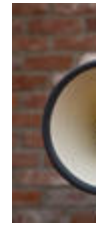
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Katharine Shilcutt ★ 1 week ago in reply to Clemdorfman

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Since this question seems to be cropping up quite a bit lately, I'm going to let The Googles handle it:

<http://www.google.com/search?s...>

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Fultonfsh 1 week ago in reply to Clemdorfman

Whatever it is, 'comfort food' is tossed around way too often and has become meaningless to me. (and definitions just muddle it further!). It will soon suffer a backlash similar to that of 'foodie'. Both are precious and dreckulous.

Like Reply



TQro 1 week ago

Hm? Branch Water Tavern is named-receiving the accolades, yet the "Crazy Oyster Roast Half Shell" link takes you to a BRC Gastropub post.

Like Reply



Katharine Shilcutt ★ 1 week ago in reply to TQro

You're right - my mistake entirely.

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Cynical 3 days ago

Texas Monthly has no relevance for restaurants outside of its home base in austin. All three restaurants it named are not "lookout for in 2011". They've already made their arrival and are well on the map. More nonsense from the town of the longhorns, over-caffeinated white people, faux-liberal, Orange County lite, pretentious, and more lame than weird.

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