

25

TOP DISHES IN FORT WORTH

by Courtney Dabney

What makes a dish one of the best in town? It's not just the high-quality ingredients or farm-fresh produce. It's the skill, creativity and, frankly, the finesse of the chefs who combine them in such intriguing ways. You may find some of your own favorites on our list or may be inspired to try something new.

Dining is more than just eating food, more than even eating "good" food. It is the entire experience of exploring new flavors and the excitement of being presented with unexpected combinations. It is first enjoying the food visually. It is opening your senses to the aromas, textures and tastes placed before you.

Our top 25 dishes are arranged in no particular order. Any would be best enjoyed with friends willing to use their senses and discuss their impressions along with you. It's fun to make dining a group experience and focus on what you're eating. So thanks to all my friends who are always so willing to dine and discuss, and here's to you and your friends who now have 25 more reasons to get together and enjoy a good meal.

And, last but not least, here's to all the brilliant chefs we have around town serving up the product of their experience and passion so that we may truly dine.



Bonnell's Fine Texas Cuisine:
Spicy Grilled Chicken Sandwich



Bonnell's Fine Texas Cuisine:

Spicy Grilled Chicken Sandwich with herbed mayo, arugula, tomato and pepper jack cheese (\$10 on the lunch menu)

It has been described as the best chicken sandwich ever! Why so good? While you can get a chicken sandwich anywhere, Chef Jon Bonnell says, "It's all in the details ... we start with good ingredients and treat them right." He marinates the chicken in jalapeño and garlic, then dusts it with his Texas Red Dirt Rub before grilling it over pecan wood. A slice of pepper jack is melted over the top just before plating. Mayo with hints of basil, tarragon and thyme is spread on rich, buttery challah bread, and the dish is finished off with locally grown arugula and tomato. Who else could elevate the humble chicken sandwich to such heights?

Ellerbe Fine Foods:

Roasted Pork Shortrib (\$23)

Chef Molly McCook braises the well-marbled short ribs for between two and four hours until they are falling-off-the-bone tender. Then a pecan praline crust is glazed over the top, and they are baked until the crust forms, imparting its crunchy sweetness to the dish. Plating begins with Waco pepperjack grits, so named because of their start in the Homestead Gristmill in Waco, adding a touch of spice. Fresh green beans from the Carter Farm are layered on next followed by the short rib. You will find a hint of bacon throughout the dish, and it is finished off with a bourbon demi glaze.

M&O Station Grill:

Bleu cow burger (\$10.97)

M&O Station Grill has not only mastered the burger, but also the French fry. Potatoes that are cut fresh twice daily are the secret.



This old-school burger joint packs a punch in one of its most requested burgers. M&O marinates fresh, never-frozen ground hamburger meat in the house marinade for 24 - 48 hours. The flavors of pungent blue cheese and salty bacon are infused between two 6-ounce patties. It is literally brimming with crumbled blue cheese and two strips of crispy bacon. The bun is buttered and toasted, the way all good hamburger buns should be. The burger is served with a side of hand-cut French fries cut fresh twice daily.

Reata Restaurant:

Tenderloin Tamales with Pecan Mash (\$11.95)

This appetizer or lunch dish is a huge portion with two hand-rolled tamales filled with corn, ground tenderloin, red bell pepper and cilantro. They are presented sliced down the middle with two labor-intensive sauces to savor on the side. The first is the Pecan Mash, consisting of roasted pecans, olive oil, Asiago cheese and cilantro, which are puréed like a pesto sauce. The other is a Sundried Tomato Cream sauce. Chef Juan Rodriguez says, "It has been one of our top sellers for years. These tamales are unique, and we sell between 5,000-6,000 of them each year at Main Street Arts Festival."

Shinjuku Station:

Okonomiyaki "Japanese Pizza" with pork belly, cabbage and kizami shoga (\$7)

While the restaurant has it billed as a type of pizza for



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Roasted Pork Shortrib