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Photograph by Kevin Marple



James says: My wife and I had dinner this Saturday and it was an unreal experience. The food was great, beautiful and a fresh of breath air this city needed. Try the duck confit! Service was spot on and very unobtrusive. They were extremely knowledgeable about the food and wine. Already made reservations for this weekend. (October 20th, 2009 at 9:51pm)

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[Farmer’s Market Tomato Salad \(September 2009\) »](#)

It seems every restaurant in the country is doing the locavore two-step these days. No longer is it enough to prepare superlative food and provide diners with lifelong memories. Now harried owners and chefs must also scurry around finding local sources for everything from parsley to pork belly. Does this mania actually reduce a menu’s carbon footprint? Hard to say. Unquestionably, though, it supports local growers, and that counts for a lot. One of the most dedicated of these pro-environment enterprises is Ellerbe Fine Foods. Located on a gentrifying stretch of Magnolia Avenue, it popped up three months ago like one of the cheerful posies on its crisp white tablecloths. And in short order, it charmed the pants off everyone it met.

I was won over about five seconds after my appetizer arrived. Featuring Mexia peaches (yes, local, but more importantly, ripe), the seductive summer salad (pictured) hit one pure flavor note after another: the bracing bitterness of arugula, the tart bite of citrus vinaigrette, and the nuttiness of sweet toasted pecans (from Millican Pecan Company, in San Saba). Almost as wonderful was a friend’s salad of crisp ruby-red watermelon and (sadly bland) Crenshaw melon paired with pungent mint, shavings of Italian ham, and nibbles of near-lemony chèvre from Deborah’s Farmstead—simply some of the best goat cheese in Texas.

Most evenings, the entrée list runs to seven or so changing items, each more inviting than the last. Initially, I coveted the herbed double lamb chops with lemon-zest-spiked kalamata tapenade. But I was beaten to the punch by a friend, who proceeded to gloat over her victory by moaning each time she took a bite. I felt duty-bound to point out that the chops weren’t all that evenly cooked, but she wasn’t listening. In revenge, I filched half of her pan-seared feta gnocchi while she was rolling her eyes.

Next, I had my heart set on the whole rainbow trout trussed in bacon, topped with a schmear of tarragon crème fraîche, and sided by sautéed baby eggplant. Drat—another friend got dibs on it. So I had to settle for mounds of exquisitely tender pork shank in an

unbelievable broth formed by the mingling of meat juices, grain-mustard jus, and the “pot likker” from the accompanying crisp-tender black-eyed peas. Poor me.

If these dishes sound reassuringly familiar, that might be because chef Molly McCook and Richard King, co-owners and natives of Shreveport, have a strong commitment to both their Southern heritage and the Texas city they now call home. You can see it in McCook’s aforementioned dedication to regional produce, as well as in Cajun dishes like her rich maque choux, a medley of corn and tomatoes studded with tender crawfish. As for King, he wisely chose to recycle a twenties service station instead of constructing a new building. The resulting redo, spruced up with fresh woodwork inside and tubs of rosemary and mint outside, is the menu’s soul mate. You might say the duo represents local dining at its best. Beer & wine. 1501 W. Magnolia Ave (817-926-3663). Lunch Tue—Fri 11—2. Dinner Tue—Thur 5:30—9, Fri & Sat 5:30—10. Closed Sun & Mon. \$\$\$ W+ +

Recipe for [Farmer’s Market Tomato Salad](#), [Hushpuppy Croutons](#), [Buttermilk Dressing](#) and [Blue Cheese](#) from Ellerbe Fine Foods.



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