

Meetings Focus®

THE DESTINATION EXPERTS

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Test Drive

West Virginia's Artsy Side

DFW Metroplex: Recipes for Success

Southern Exposure

*Northwest Florida has
the Old South covered*

Digital Edition Exclusive:

> **7A Making Good: Strategic CSR
Has Entered the Mainstream**

Stampede 66, Dallas

Recipes for Success

The Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex dishes out delectable diversions

AS CELEBRATED DALLAS CHEF Kent Rathbun once explained to me, the rich variety of the North Texas culinary scene owes much to the region's central U.S. location, and in particular, the daily import of global food and delicacies into DFW International Airport.

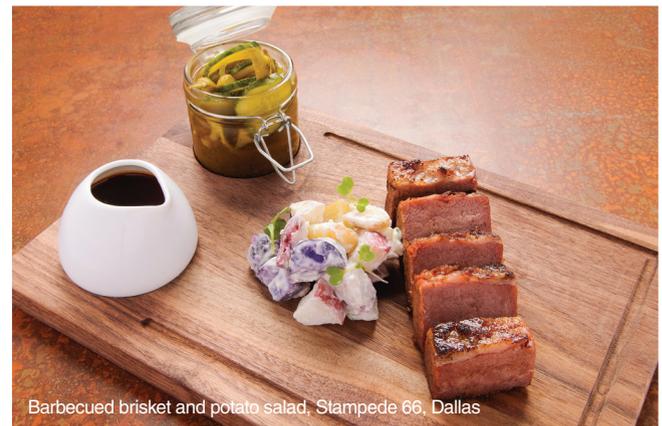
Endlessly inventive, the area's menus typically reflect a creative, entrepreneurial, no-holds-barred attitude to ingredients, flavors, presentation and the overall dining experience. In keeping with national trends, local sourcing, slow cooking, farm-to-fork and back-to-roots artisanship all figure prominently in the mix, but true to Texas, the spirit of independence fires the grills in Metroplex kitchens.

New hot spots are popping up all over town, such as in the up-and-coming Design District in Dallas, where brash upstarts OAK, FT33, Off-Site Kitchen and Meddlesome Moth are among the newcomers to watch. Fort Worth, birthplace of chuckwagon cowboy cuisine, is introducing its first food and wine celebration in March 2014, paying homage to the city's creative culinary scene.

Put gastronomic gatherings on your group menu at these 10 tasty restaurants and culinary experiences around the Metroplex.

STAMPEDE 66, DALLAS
www.stampede66.com

With an insatiable appetite for new ventures—he is approaching 20 openings throughout his celebrated career—Southwestern cuisine



Barbecued brisket and potato salad. Stampede 66, Dallas

patriarch Stephan Pyles playfully tips his hat to his West Texas roots in this hotly anticipated new restaurant.

Featuring Texas longhorns, steel horse sculptures, a wire-sculpture rattlesnake and—in the middle of the expansive space—a massive metal “Tree of Life” reaching up to a bright blue-sky-painted ceiling, the affordable eatery is Big Country Texas all the way.

Inspired in part by his iconic Star Canyon restaurant from the '90s, Stampede 66 (named for a dance hall and Phillips 66 gas station from Big Spring, Texas, where Pyles grew up and worked in his parents' diner) opened in November 2012 to rave local reviews. Honey-fried chicken, Frito pie with homemade Frito-style chips and other offerings are alive with Pyles' customary zest and flavor.

Available for group buyouts of around 130 people, the restaurant also offers a private dining room for up to 25 guests and a screened-in fire pit area for cocktails.

UPTOWN DALLAS FOOD TOURS, DALLAS
www.toursdallas.net

Launched this summer, Dallas-based Food Tours of America is an exciting new tour and private event offering that takes groups via trolley on culinary and cultural explorations of the city's historic Uptown neighborhood.

“The Dallas Convention and Visitors Bureau is excited to start promoting a very needed component to complement the Dallas cu-

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DALLAS

▶ The stylish **Joule Dallas** (214.748.1300; www.thejouledallas.com) is undergoing a \$78 million renovation and expansion. The project will add almost an entire city block to the hotel, including an enlarged lobby, 31 additional guest rooms and suites, a spa and upscale shopping and dining experiences. Slated for completion by this spring, the enhancement will also more than triple the hotel's function space, adding an expanded ballroom, a new junior ballroom and five meeting rooms.

▶ **Hyatt Regency Dallas at Reunion** (214.651.1234; www.dallasregency.hyatt.com) is undergoing a \$50 million makeover and upgrade of the hotel's 1,120 guest rooms, bathrooms and corridors, with completion set for early 2013. The property also features a newly transformed 18-story atrium space.

▶ Located in a renovated century-old building in the city's South Side/Cedars area, **NYLO Dallas South Side** (214.421.1080; www.nylohotels.com) is a new 76-room boutique property offering flexible indoor meeting rooms and 4,500 square feet of rooftop terrace space.

FORT WORTH

▶ Construction began in spring 2012 on an expansion of the popular **Sundance Square** (www.sundancesquare.com) entertainment district, including plans for a new 55,000-square-foot public plaza that will create a compelling and inviting space in the heart of the city's dynamic downtown. Featuring a permanent event stage facing the plaza, the project is set for completion by this fall.

FRISCO

▶ Opened in November, the 122-room, all-suite, extended-stay **Home2 Suites by Hilton Dallas-Frisco** (972.377.7300; www.home2suites3.hilton.com) is the first of its kind in North Texas.

▶ Fully renovated and opened in November, the 122-room Holiday Inn Frisco is now the **Holiday Inn Express Frisco** (972.668.5959; www.hiexpress.com).

▶ Following a recent renovation of its lobby, fitness center and pool, the 105-room **Hampton Inn & Suites Legacy Park-Frisco** (972.712.8400; www.hamptoninn3.hilton.com) plans to finish a floor-by-floor room renovation this year.

PLANO

▶ Yet to break ground but expected to open in mid-2014, a full-service **Hilton** (www.hilton.com) is planned for Plano's Granite Park. The property will feature 19,500 square feet of meeting space and between 250 and 300 rooms.

linary scene through Food Tours of America," says Phillip Jones, president and CEO of the Dallas CVB. "This unique 'foodie' opportunity will allow our visitors from around the world to experience and taste the exciting and unique culinary attributes that Dallas has to offer."

Certified through The North Texas Tourism Ambassadors Program and a member of the CVB, the new program takes groups of up to 18 (more for customizable private gatherings) off the beaten path for food tastings and cultural walking tours in the 125-year-old Uptown district, considered the city's most pedestrian-friendly neighborhood.

FIRESTONE & ROBERTSON WHISKEY DISTILLERY, FORT WORTH
www.frdistilling.com

In 2009, friends Leonard Firestone and Troy Robertson discovered a common ambition—to make artisanal whiskey. Opened in May, their eponymous operation, housed in a 1920s warehouse near Fort Worth's once infamous Hell's Half Acre district, is the region's first artisanal bourbon distillery.

Their two distinct brands include a straight bourbon whiskey made from locally grown corn and wheat and a proprietary yeast strain isolated from a North Texas pecan nut.

Tours are available, along with four function spaces, including The Barrel Floor, accommodating several hundred people and offering views of the production equipment. The building's original bank vault is ideal for intimate private tastings and dinners, along with the Tasting Room, and there are two



Firestone & Robertson Whiskey Distillery, Fort Worth



Rahr Brewing, Fort Worth

lawns for outdoor gatherings.

"Guests will marvel at our rehabilitated industrial building, our beautiful copper stills and the whiskey casks stored throughout the building," Firestone says. "If you are looking to generate positive energy and a lasting impression for your clients, this is the place."

RAHR BREWING, FORT WORTH
www.rahrbrewing.com

With a brewing history dating back to its founding days in Wisconsin in 1847, Rahr & Sons Brewing Co. came to Fort Worth in 2004 when fifth-generation brewer Fritz Rahr, inspired by his family's legacy, launched his own operation here. Initial production was small, but national acclaim and recognition would soon follow for his high-quality brews.

After a heavy snowfall collapsed the brewery's roof in 2010, Fritz built a new facility, which now produces some 15,000 barrels of award-winning seasonal and year-round beers such as Iron Thistle, a dark Scottish ale, and fan-favorite Ugly Pug.

The 20,000-square-foot open-air facility is the setting for popular tours and tastings on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and for a wide range of events, with comfortable seating for up to 100 guests Hofbrau-style.

After each brew day, the environmentally conscious brewery provides more than a ton of spent grain to the Texas Hereford Association, which then feeds the grain to cattle.

RANCH AT LAS COLINAS, IRVING
www.theranchlc.com

Ranch hands and high-powered business types comfortably rub shoulders at this contemporary farm-to-fork restaurant in the heart of Irving's business district, where a passion for Lone Star cuisine drives a flavor-some indigenous menu.

Like a culinary road trip throughout Texas, ingredients include farm-raised shrimp from San Antonio, quail from cowboy-capital Bandera, sweet butter from Garland and Texas Kobe Beef raised in the Southern Plains.

The restaurant also harvests Texan musical talent. From Amarillo to Austin to El Paso, up-and-coming Texas bands play live on The Porch, the eatery's intimate adjoining venue.

Eddie Deen Crossroads Smokehouse, Arlington



For groups, there are two handsome and accommodating private function areas. Built specifically for banquets, the Eldorado and Fleetwood rooms come equipped with state-of-the-art audio, video, plasma screens, wireless microphones, leather seats and an atmosphere geared for successful gatherings. The Porch is also available for private rental.

CULINARY MARKET AT GAYLORD TEXAN RESORT, GRAPEVINE
www.gaylordhotels.com

With a collection of restaurants, bars and lounges, including the open-air Riverwalk Cantina, the high-energy Glass Cactus nightclub and the brand's signature Old Hickory Steakhouse, guests have a number of nourishing options at the Gaylord Texan Hotel and Convention Center.

A veritable planner's feast offering 1,511 rooms, more than 400,000 square feet of flexible meeting space and a dazzling four-and-a-half acres of indoor gardens and winding waterways, the Gaylord also offers this fun, interactive culinary experience on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons.

Led by Executive Chef Ty Thoren and his

team of top chefs, groups of between 30 and 50 people are divided into sub units that then rotate between four-course stations. In addition to one-on-one training, hands-on meal preparation and take-away recipe cards, participants can also learn about wine and cheese pairings from the property's sommelier.

EDDIE DEEN CROSSROADS SMOKEHOUSE, ARLINGTON
www.eddiedeencrossroads.com

After opening his first barbecue joint in

1980, Texas restaurateur and catering legend Eddie Deen went on to global fame, including catering more than a half-dozen inaugural celebrations for former President George W. Bush and Texas Gov. Rick Perry.

When not feeding thousands, he attracts loyal customers to his collection of Metroplex-area barbecue venues, which include the recently opened 1010 Collins Entertainment & Event Center and Crossroads, both located in Arlington across from Cowboys Stadium.

Deen takes a spiritual approach to his

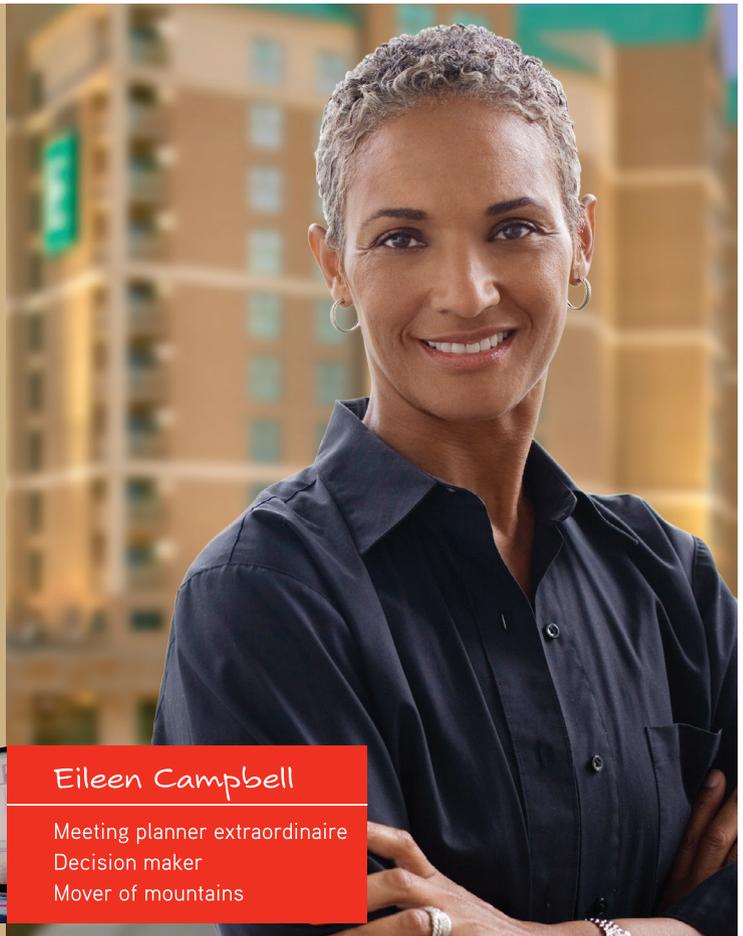
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barbecue cooking, reflected in classics like his tender beef brisket and heavenly signature sauce. Along with catering services and spaces like the outdoor beer garden, Crossroads offers group cooking classes.

“We have a passion for sharing our knowledge and helping groups taking our barbecue and bread-making classes to allow their masterpieces to unfold from within,” says Paul Calhoun, the restaurant’s general manager.

CHEF’S CHALLENGE, EMBASSY SUITES, FRISCO
www.embassysuites1.hilton.com

Especially well-suited for corporate groups, The Chef’s Challenge at the newly opened Embassy Suites Hotel Convention Center & Spa is a culinary team-building exercise infused with leadership lessons.

First, the “host” introduces the concept, typically to five teams of four participants. Each team has 10 minutes to produce a team name and apron design.

Led by one of the hotel’s chefs, each team then has 45 minutes to design and prepare a full-course meal. The fun begins with the introduction of mystery ingredients—and halfway through, a change of chef.

Teams are judged based on team name and apron design creativity, incorporation of mystery ingredients, presentation and quality of food, and teamwork.

“We feel that we have developed a fun concept that is truly interactive,” says Dustin Logan, the hotel’s director of catering and convention services. “When the lessons are revealed at the finish, there is always an ‘awe’ moment from all of the students.”



WHISKEY CAKE KITCHEN & BAR, PLANO
www.whiskey-cake.com

Opened in 2010, this farm-to-fork eatery prides itself on using fresh produce grown either at the restaurant or on local farms, and takes a “made from scratch, slow-cooked” approach to its generous menu of meats, fish and other selections.

True to its name, the bar offers the largest selection of whiskey bourbon and scotch in the city, along with 24 American craft beers on tap. Some made with fresh fruit and vegetable juices, the mix of “garden-to-glass” whiskey cocktails includes tempting numbers like the “Left Hook Lucy” and “Wabbit Smash.” The namesake “Whiskey Cake,” meanwhile, is a confection of toffee torte, bourbon, spiced pecans and whipped cream.

“Whiskey Cake is a great choice for private events,” says Sean Conner, bar manager at the venue. “In addition to a 72-seat side room with sliding doors for complete exclusivity, we offer two large community dining tables, four lounge areas and a heated outdoor patio, also seating 72, available year-round.”

8-SECOND CLUB, MESQUITE
www.mesquiterodeo.com

Accommodating groups of up to 7,000 people for special events and private gatherings, Mesquite Arena, home to the long-running Mesquite ProRodeo, also rents this versatile members’ club to outside groups.

“Seating 165 in a Texas-chic atmosphere, the 8-Second Club is



Whiskey Cake Kitchen & Bar, Plano

a fabulous choice for groups seeking an interesting and different environment,” says Judy Skowron, director of the Mesquite CVB. “Fast becoming one of Mesquite’s most popular venues, its capacity can be expanded to around 275 people via newly opened patio space and access to the arena’s lobby area.”

Configurable in a number of seating arrangements, the modern Western-themed club, with its own private entrance, also comes with in-house catering offering customized

catering menus, flat-screen TVs for presentations and staff support for themed events. **MFS**

Regular MEETINGS FOCUS SOUTH contributor Jeff Heilman owes his insatiable devotion to the food and drink of the Metroplex to Kent Rathbun and the chefs of the Texas Mafia.

Search for detailed information about CVBs, hotels and meeting facilities in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex by visiting our website at MeetingsFocus.com/Texas.

CVB Contacts

Dallas CVB
214.571.1000
www.visitdallas.com

Experience Arlington
817.265.7721
www.experiencearlington.org

Fort Worth CVB
817.336.8791
www.fortworth.com

Frisco CVB
972.292.5250
www.visitfrisco.com

Grapevine CVB
817.410.3185
www.grapevintexasusa.com

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www.irvingtexas.com

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