



# Best Brunch\*

# 24

*Egg-tastic Spots  
for the Week's Most  
Important Meal*

+ THE TOP BRUNCH COCKTAILS  
& THE BEST HOTEL BRUNCHES

Photography by KEVIN MARPLE

\*EDITOR'S NOTE:  
We define brunch as  
a weekend-only meal.  
Restaurants that serve  
breakfast throughout the  
week—while they may  
be perfectly tasty—were  
not eligible for this list.



opposite page  
SMOKE'S DOUBLE  
BARREL BLOODY  
MARY

this page  
THE GRAPE'S  
SHREDDED OXTAIL  
AND BANANA  
PEPPER HASH





## Best Brunch

### UPTOWN

#### MALAI KITCHEN

WEST VILLAGE, 3699 MCKINNEY AVE.,  
STE. 319. 214-599-7857  
BRUNCH SERVED SATURDAY AND SUNDAY

BRUNCH AT A THAI RESTAURANT may sound off-putting, but Malai Kitchen's breakfast fare with a Thai-Vietnamese twist will set you straight. Don't go expecting Sterno-heated chafing dishes; everything here is cooked to order. We found the cozy patio surprisingly quiet on a Saturday at noon, but the friendly service made up for any loneliness we may have felt. Each diner receives an amuse-bouche of sticky rice and eggplant dip. Chef Braden Wages turns French toast into an Asian delicacy. He tops thick slices of a Vietnamese baguette with flambéed bananas. Warm coconut syrup, which is made with coconut milk and palm sugar, and contains hints of tamarind and mango, comes on the side. His version of eggs Benedict is done Malai style, which means coconut-spiked biscuits, Thai basil, shrimp, and poached eggs, all covered with a Thai chile hollandaise sauce. We admit we were leery



MALAI'S BANH MI FRENCH TOAST

of this dish, but it turned out to be the highlight of the meal and worth every artery-clogging calorie. Other offerings include a scrambled egg mix with curry "salsa," Vietnamese noodle soup, fried rice topped with a fried egg, and a Vietnamese burger. There are \$3 mimosas and \$5 Bloody Marys, but splurge on a Lemongrass Fizz, a concoction of Ketel One Citroen, St-Germain, lemongrass syrup, and sparkling wine designed by mixologist Jason Kosmas. The flavors don't collide with the cuisine.

### LOWEST GREENVILLE

#### THE LIBERTINE

2101 GREENVILLE AVE. 214-824-7900  
BRUNCH SERVED SUNDAY ONLY

THE LIBERTINE IS A FULL-service establishment for serious beer drinkers. Every Saturday night they tempt with pints (and pints) of Belgian Chimay and sinful-sounding lagers such as Southern Star Bombshell Blonde. On Sunday morning, the kitchen offers a brunch menu designed to ease the pain those pints inflicted the night before. Take a seat—preferably the same one you occupied only a



HATTIE'S HANGTOWN SCRAMBLE



HATTIE'S

few hours earlier—and order a Snake in the Grass, a soothing concoction of green chartreuse, St-Germain, citrus juice, and Peruvian bitters. As the fog begins to lift, pluck sautéed shrimp from creamy manchego cheese grits. If you're craving eggs, go with a ragin' Cajun-style Benedict with andouille sausage and grilled crawfish piled atop an English muffin and covered with a poached egg and a runny dollop of hollandaise. Need a stiffer kick-start? Order the chilaquiles, a spicy mixture of eggs, tortilla slices, and tomatillo sauce.

### NORTH OAK CLIFF

#### HATTIE'S

418 N. BISHOP AVE. 214-942-7400  
BRUNCH SERVED SUNDAY ONLY

LONG BEFORE NORTH OAK Cliff's Bishop Arts District became one of the city's more popular culinary destinations, this graceful Southern belle set the standard for fine dining south of the Trinity. It's easy to see why. Brunch at Hattie's is as sleepy and seductive as a Mississippi drawl, and the offerings are down-home delicious. The Hangtown Scramble is a gustatory hangover helper: herbed scrambled eggs, hash browns, and

bacon-wrapped fried oysters all topped with Parmesan shavings and a red chile hollandaise drizzle. Breaded pork cutlets come with fried eggs and sweet potato hash browns. For those with a sweeter taste, cornmeal griddle cakes and sourdough French toast with bananas Foster sauce are sinfully indulgent. Yet every time we visit Hattie's, we have a hard time not ordering the chicken and waffles: a perfectly fried chicken breast sitting atop a crispy waffle drenched in spicy maple syrup. It's an off-the-menu gem.

### UPTOWN

#### KOMALI

4152 COLE AVE. 214-252-0200  
BRUNCH SERVED SATURDAY AND SUNDAY

OWNER AND CHEF Abraham Salum's love affair with chiles is evident all over Komali's brunch menu. From rich pasillas to smoky chipotles to mellow poblanos, his regional Mexican cooking is soothing and fragrant, a far cry from cheesy-greasy Tex-Mex (not that there's anything wrong with that). With its sisal-covered walls and airy, light-filled interior, Komali feels like a Baja getaway. Brunch entrées are likewise a



AVA'S RANDALL COPELAND AND NATHAN TATE

### ROCKWALL

#### Restaurant Ava

108 S. GOLIAD ST., ROCKWALL. 469-698-9920  
Brunch served Sunday only

Don't let your big-city snobbery show. Though this charming and rustic restaurant is located in historic downtown Rockwall—yes, Rockwall—it's contemporary American fare is some of the finest in North Texas. Chefs/owners Randall Copeland and Nathan Tate's farm-to-table mantra is evident in the list of local produce and meats they use: Athey Farm eggs, Barking Cat Farm greens, J.T. Lemley's produce, and more. Likewise, their brunch is fresh and satisfying, with offerings changing with the season. One thing remains constant: every brunch begins with complimentary homemade biscuits. A self-proclaimed biscuit aficionado at our table declared Ava's big, fluffy, moist biscuits the finest he's had in Texas. That's high praise. The smoked brisket scramble is a ridiculously enormous plate featuring pecan-smoked brisket, eggs, potatoes, queso fresco, and fried tortilla strips. Roll it all up in a slightly charred flour tortilla and spoon on some roasted tomato salsa. Cinnamon roll French toast has a welcome granola-

baked crunch with plenty of warm, spicy cinnamon flavor while not being too sweet. A side of house-smoked bacon certainly doesn't hurt. That same delicious bacon appears in Ava's three-cheese-and-spinach quiche. With brunch this fine, you might catch yourself plotting your next visit to Rockwall. Or some casual house hunting.



SMOKED BRISKET SCRAMBLE



CINNAMON ROLL FRENCH TOAST



BIG 'OL BISCUIT SANDWICH





## Best Brunch

respite from the ordinary. Huevos pochados feature two corn sopes—thick masa patties lightly fried—topped with chorizo, poached eggs, and pasilla hollandaise. It's a zesty, dense dish for those with hearty appetites. A lighter option is the lump crab-stuffed crepes bathed in a lovely poblano cream and queso Oaxaca. Migas and chilaquiles—no strangers to most Texans—are traditional Mexican breakfast options cooked well by chef Salum. For a sweet ending, you can't go wrong with sugar-dusted churros. At Komali, they come with a cup of Mexican hot chocolate.

**OAK LAWN DISH**  
4123 CEDAR SPRINGS RD., STE. 110. 214-522-3474  
BRUNCH SERVED SUNDAY ONLY

BY NIGHT, DISH IS ONE of the hottest clubs in

town, with a sleek, colorful bar, several shimmering chandeliers, and a DJ booth thumping out beats well into the early morning hours. All of that makes the contrast even more surreal on Sunday mornings, when the club turns into a sophisticated restaurant serving what is probably the gayborhood's best brunch. Gone are the dance floor and the DJ but not the colorful cocktails and pleasant party atmosphere. The menu offers all manner of remedy for your throbbing headache, from the light (a Cobb Martini salad) to the hearty (a scramble of short ribs, potato, onion, tomatoes, and a chile hollandaise sauce). A signature breakfast sandwich comes piled high with smoked ham, bacon, a fried egg, and white cheddar cheese. The bacon-fried chicken and

soft, fluffy malted waffles—covered in warm maple syrup, of course—are tasty enough to make anyone forget the mistakes of a night spent sinning.

**NORTH DALLAS MAXIMO**  
5301 ALPHA RD., STE. 80. 972-233-5656  
BRUNCH SERVED SUNDAY ONLY

SUNDAY BRUNCH AT THE Maximo Cocina Mexicana & Margarita Lounge has the same luxury and authority you would expect from a five-star hotel. No surprise. Chef Amador Mora worked for the Rosewood Mansion on Turtle Creek for 23 years, and you can feel that polish and cohesion on the plate. The menu reflects his unique viewpoint of high-end crossed with Mexican—a fusion of traditional cuisine with a Mexican twist. Fried chicken and cheesy mashed potatoes,

for example, get a drizzle of poblano gravy. Fried eggs are served with black beans and soft corn tortillas, and eggs Benedict is done "Pueblan style," with the eggs propped on corn sopes instead of English muffin. French toast uses Mexican bolillo bread; its accompanying butter is sweetened with Mexican piloncillo sugar. Waffles come with agave nectar syrup instead of plain maple. Pancake options are novel, too, with bananas or chocolate chips. Granola with fruit and yogurt is an anomaly until you remember that Mora made it daily at the Mansion (where granola is still featured). Everyone gets a complimentary basket of bread, and the fresh juices include orange and watermelon. Cocktails are fusion, too: the signature Maximo Heat has



MAXIMO



MAXIMO'S CHILAQUILES



MAXIMO'S AMADOR MORA



MAXIMO'S ENCHILADAS DE HUEVO

# Shake It Up

The best cocktails to go with your brunch



**MEYER LEMON BOMB**  
Tito's Handmade Vodka, Meyer lemons, topped with Paula's Texas lemon cordial foam; \$15

**THE ROSEWOOD MANSION**  
2821 TURTLE CREEK BLVD. // 214-559-2100



**STRAWBERRY FIELDS**  
Stoli Strawberry Vodka, Martini & Rossi Rosato, strawberry purée, fresh lemon juice, Crème Yvette, simple syrup, rose water, soda water; \$12

**DRAGONFLY**  
2332 LEONARD ST. // 214-550-9500



**BUBBLES & BERRIES**  
Two strawberries muddled, gin, freshly squeezed lemon juice, house-made simple syrup, Prosecco, garnish with a strawberry; \$8

**WHISKEY CAKE**  
3601 DALLAS PKWY., PLANO // 972-993-2253



**LEMONGRASS FIZZ**  
Ketel One Citroen, St-Germain, lemongrass syrup, sparkling wine; \$8

**MALAI KITCHEN**  
3699 MCKINNEY AVE., STE. 319 // 214-599-7857



**MULLIGAN BRUNCH PUNCH**  
Mionetto IL Prosecco, St-Germain, iced tea, house-made lemonade; servings for 2; \$18

**MARQUEE GRILL**  
33 HIGHLAND PARK VILLAGE // 214-522-6035



**GINGER THYME FIZZ**  
Vodka, ginger syrup, thyme, fresh lemon juice, topped with soda; \$8

**SWIG**  
1921 N. HENDERSON AVE. // 214-824-3343



**MAD HATTER**  
Seasonal berries, Tito's Handmade Vodka, citrus, St-Germain, champagne; \$10

**BOLSA**  
614 W. DAVIS ST. // 214-943-1883





## Best Brunch



JASPER'S BANANA MALT PANCAKES TOPPED WITH BLACK CURRANT CONSERVE AND VANILLA WHIPPED CREAM

muddled jalapeños, and at brunch it's a mere \$6.

**UPTOWN**  
**NICK & SAM'S GRILL**  
2816 FAIRMOUNT ST. 214-303-1880  
BRUNCH SERVED SATURDAY AND SUNDAY

PERCHED ON ONE OF THE more prominent corners in Uptown, this restaurant has patrons who are almost as beautiful and savory as executive chef Constancio Rodrigues and corporate chef Samir Dhurandhar's culinary creations. Yes, it's a taut crowd at the popular casual sibling of Nick & Sam's Steakhouse. Arrive early and grab a prized seat on the patio while you choose between a starter of crispy breakfast flautas stuffed with scrambled eggs and serrano peppers or N&S's famous sticky buns, studded with pecans and raisins and drizzled with caramel. Brunch entrées range from the classic (Toad in the Hole with barbecue pork and poached eggs set within a slice of toast and topped with deviled hollandaise) to the whimsical (Cap'n Crunch-coated French toast). Considering its

lineage, one would expect steak here to be expertly prepared, and Nick & Sam's Grill doesn't disappoint. The flat-iron steak is tender, perfectly cooked, and accompanied by two eggs, bearnaise, and a corned beef potato hash cake. For the fat phobic, fresh-squeezed juices in 10 varieties and a "hangover" smoothie with organic low-fat yogurt, fruit, and mint make it easier to fit into those skinny jeans. But from the looks of things, Nick & Sam's Grill is the one place where the see-and-be-seen crowd of Uptown throws caution and carbs to the wind. Of course, a \$6 carafe of mimosas has that effect.

**NORTH OAK CLIFF**  
**TILLMAN'S ROADHOUSE**  
324 W. SEVENTH ST. 214-942-0988  
BRUNCH SERVED SUNDAY ONLY

THIS POPULAR BISHOP Arts restaurant wears its yee-haw bravado proudly—albeit with brocade wallpaper, Murano chandeliers, and Eames midcentury chairs. Here, co-owners Sara Tillman and Todd Fiscus put a stylish spin



TILLMAN'S ROADHOUSE



TILLMAN'S STUFFED CHILES RELLENOS



TILLMAN'S CODY BRANDT AND SARA TILLMAN

on the classic Texas roadhouse. Likewise, chef Cody Brandt introduced a playful new brunch menu last year that's littered with gussied-up Southern and Texan touches. Eggs Benedict features fried green tomatoes, corn relish, and bacon-flavored mayo. Big, fluffy biscuits are blanketed in sausage poblano gravy. And Tillman's chiles rellenos

is among the city's finest, stuffed with scrambled eggs, pulled pork, Oaxacan cheese, and roasted poblano gravy. Sweet treats include brioche French toast with Grand Marnier maple syrup and braised apples, as well as a starter of monkey bread covered in caramel sauce and cream cheese frosting. Yee-haw, indeed.

**PLANO**

## Jasper's

7161 Bishop Rd., Plano, 469-229-9111  
Brunch served Saturday and Sunday

Serving "gourmet backyard cuisine," this handsome and popular Shops of Legacy restaurant is part of restaurateur Kent Rathbun's burgeoning empire (Abacus, Blue Plate Kitchen), and casual, down-home touches can be tasted all over the tempting menu. Need proof? Look no further than Gramma Minnie's fried chicken. The brunch-only offering is the stuff of childhood memories: cast-iron fried and simply seasoned with salt, pepper, and granulated garlic. Black pepper gravy with a kiss of maple syrup gives the dish its seductively sweet finish. Jasper's other brunch offerings are equally nostalgic while exuding a modern twist. Vanilla French toast is topped with caramelized honey-banana syrup. Pancakes—flavorful with bananas and malt—are topped with black currant conserve and vanilla whipped cream. Classic steak and eggs features a wood-grilled flat-iron steak sliced and served alongside smoked bacon gravy and chile-lime biscuits. And as for those biscuits? Order an extra side. Kissed with a bit of heat and citrus, they are oddly addictive and will inspire a battle over who gets the last one. Better yet, make it two orders.



JASPER'S CRAB CAKE BENEDICT



# The Best Hotel Brunches

Though most hotel restaurants serve breakfast—making them ineligible for our best brunch list—it would be a crime not to salute these deliciously inventive establishments, our favorites in Dallas.



GRANNY FEARING'S FRIED CHICKEN

## THE W HOTEL DALLAS - VICTORY

### Craft Dallas

2440 Victory Park Ln. 214-397-4111  
Brunch served Saturday and Sunday  
Craft Dallas, the W Hotel's elegant diner, follows the same artisanal approach at weekend brunch that it observes at every other meal, with an emphasis on local, seasonal ingredients. The menu runs along classic lines, but attention to detail keeps it from feeling humdrum. Buttermilk pancakes are made from scratch in-house, and the maple syrup is the real deal from Vermont. Eggs Benedict features blue crab and an egg that's perfectly poached. Omelet fillings include wild mushrooms—no mere button—and only the greenest spears of asparagus. There are a few wild cards, such as an extra-juicy short rib and shishito pepper hash with diced potatoes, or a cheeseburger topped with an over-easy egg. The cinnamon roll and other pastries are made on-site. Pair one with a side of white cheddar grits or, better yet, a bowl of granola or steel-cut oats with raisins and dried fruit. For those seeking a huge spread, portions might seem model-size, while prices are not. But the service is sublime, and, besides, it's the W. What do you expect?

## THE ROSEWOOD MANSION

### Rosewood Mansion on Turtle Creek

2821 Turtle Creek Blvd. 214-559-2100  
Brunch served Saturday and Sunday  
Even at brunch, the Mansion is the ultimate in refined dining, with white tablecloths, doting service, and things done just so. Forget the tacky buffet—this is a tasting menu, \$49 a person. The menu is carefully curated, with new items from chef Bruno Davailon folded in with Mansion "musts." There must be tortilla soup. There must be granola parfait, layered with yogurt and berries. Then it's on to Davailon's twists on classic Franco cooking. Soups rotate. Right now, it's celery root bisque with soft chunks of lobster. There's a crab cake Benedict with wilted spinach, poached egg, and hollandaise sauce. Biscuits and gravy are a standout, with two eggs, spicy jalapeño sausage and shredded hash browns. Don't forget dessert, an ever-changing menu that runs from piémont with dark chocolate mousse to vanilla panna cotta with coconut meringue and exotic sorbet.

## RITZ-CARLTON DALLAS

### Fearing's Restaurant

2121 McKinney Ave. 214-922-4848  
Brunch served Sunday only  
Ritz-Carlton Dallas may have a glamorous veneer, but the Sunday brunch at Fearing's has a surprisingly down-home vibe. The menu seems virtually torn from chef Dean Fearing's family album; just about every item has a personal angle. Carmella's Truck Stop Beef Enchiladas—a funky casserole with tortillas, beef, chili gravy, and a topper of fried eggs—was inspired by Fearing's assistant, Carmella Henson. Cos' Chili is the dish Fearing devised for Bill Cosby 18 years ago. It's served on jalapeño cheddar cheese biscuits, poached egg, and poblano hollandaise sauce. You don't have to guess the source of Granny Fearing's "paper bag shook" fried chicken, with green beans cooked all day like his grandmother made them in eastern

Kentucky, served with whipped potatoes and smoky tomato gravy. The ethereal Jaxson and Campbell Style Pancakes are named for Fearing's two sons. Of all the major brunch spots in town, Fearing's makes the most thoughtful effort toward vegetarians with a stand-alone vegetarian brunch menu that includes a vegetable "kibbeh" crusted in chopped pistachio with rice and tomato-ginger chutney, and a nifty vegetarian sampler with spinach enchilada, butternut squash taquito, and avocado fries. The signature Bloody Mary is a unique spin—a little bit spicy, with baby tortilla strips, fresh jalapeño, and a smattering of micro-cilantro sprouts.

## HOTEL ZAZA

### Dragonfly

2332 Leonard St. 214-550-9500  
Brunch served Saturday and Sunday  
In the brunch world, Dragonfly at Hotel ZaZa has become better known for its monthly brunch party called Sunday School, held every third Sunday. There, brunch is accompanied by line dancing, sparklers, and people dressed in panda costumes. But the hotel does have a more conventional brunch every Saturday and Sunday, with a spread that combines "hotel classic" with ZaZa's hipster persona. There is the quintessential house-made granola, a basket of muffins and breads, and buttermilk flapjacks with Vermont maple syrup. But at no ordinary hotel would you find Pigs in a Snuggie—chicken-apple sausage links dipped in pancake batter and deep fried. Or chicken-fried lobster Benedict, with lobster chunks battered and fried, then placed on a potato cake with spinach and hollandaise. Dragonfly is surely the only place serving a pepperoni pizza omelet with San Marzano tomato sauce and mozzarella cheese. If the cliché is true that brunches exist to cure a hangover, then Dragonfly's will punch your hangover in the face. Its coffee vodka espresso liqueur with St. Elizabeth Allspice Dram and milk makes for one fearsome hair of the dog.

## THE BELMONT HOTEL

### Smoke

901 Fort Worth Ave. 214-393-4141  
Brunch served Saturday and Sunday  
Located at the historic Belmont Hotel—a renovated 1940s motor court that oozes cool cat charm—this is easily the hippest brunch in Dallas. Chef/co-owner Tim Byres serves artisanal smokehouse-style fare putting a hearty meaty spin on brunch classics. House-smoked ham, a farm egg fritter, sweet corn griddlecakes, and Dr Pepper redevye gravy elevate standard ham and eggs to down-home haute cuisine status. Thick, cakelike ricotta pancakes are studded with a heavy dose of blueberries and topped with vanilla poached apricots and whipped cream. Smoked brisket cornbread hash is served with green chile rajas, pearl onions, and a poached egg. You get the picture: meat, and lots of it. That's a good thing because Byres smokes all of his breakfast meats in-house, including thick-cut pork belly bacon that is knife-and-fork indulgent. Southern touches fill the menu—sorghum molasses, collard greens, and homemade jams and jellies—and the restaurant has an easy-going Austin vibe that draws both families and hipsters on the weekends.



SMOKE'S TIM BYRES



THE MANSION'S BRUNO DAVAILON



CRAFT'S SHORT RIB AND SHISHITO PEPPER HASH



FEARING'S





NOSH'S CHEF JON STEVENS



NOSH'S SPANISH CHORIZO HASH



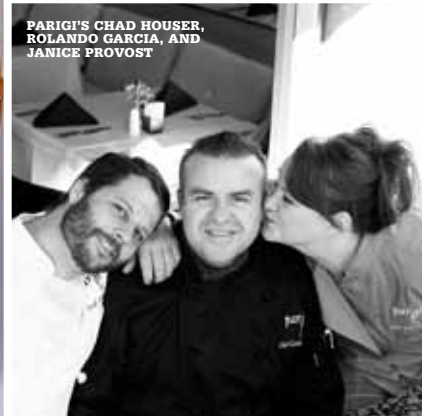
NOSH'S CROQUE MONSIEUR



AL BIERNAT'S BRIOCHE FRENCH TOAST



CANE ROSSO'S BREAKFAST PANINI



PARIGI'S CHAD HOUSER, ROLANDO GARCIA, AND JANICE PROVOST



CANE ROSSO'S COFFEE AND DONUTS

**PLANO**  
**NOSH EURO BISTRO PLANO**  
 4701 W. PARK BLVD., STE. 101, PLANO 972-612-3200  
 BRUNCH SERVED SUNDAY ONLY

VETERAN DALLAS CHEF Avner Samuel and his wife, Celeste, have finally struck a successful culinary vein. They closed their fine dining restaurant, Aurora, in 2010, and reopened the Highland Park space as the more casual Nosh Euro Bistro. The New American menu features a few of Avner's greatest Mediterranean hits, and, judging from the crowds, it's a match made in heaven. Recently the couple opened a second location in Plano, and that is where we found ourselves seated at a large community table sipping bottomless sparkly sangria (\$10) and

brunching with an almost-full room of late-morning diners. The brunch menu is basically the Nosh lunch menu plus five brunchy items: braised short rib tacos, buttermilk fried chicken breast and thigh with biscuits and gravy, Spanish chorizo hash, and a traditional eggs Benedict, as well as a rogue version made with beef tenderloin, "melted onions," bacon, and béarnaise. The best bites came from the finely diced roasted potatoes mixed with strips of chorizo and red peppers topped with a pan-fried egg and drizzled with a smoked paprika aioli. The dark yellow, almost orange, yolk was firm. Once pierced by the tine of a fork, however, the lava-like liquid swirled slowly

around the tasty potato hash. We could not resist the temptation of the butterscotch pot au crème. Sweet sin on a Sunday, this thick, rich pudding with two shortbread cookies is evil genius in a cup.

**PARK CITIES**  
**AL BIERNAT'S**  
 4217 OAK LAWN AVE. 214-219-2201  
 BRUNCH SERVED SUNDAY ONLY

EXPENSIVE CARS IDLE IN the valet line, but inside Al Biernat's at brunch, jeans and flats have replaced suits and heels. The dim lights of dinner service have been raised, giving the dining room a brighter, lighter vibe. But besides a costume change and a flipped dimmer switch, not much else goes casual at Al's in the morning. The

service remains impeccable, and the food still meets every expectation. A basket of pastries comes gratis, and it takes a hearty helping of willpower to keep from filling up on croissants and iced cinnamon bread. But resist you must, because the brunch menu offers two full pages of deliciousness to explore. The lobster and scrambled egg tacos, for instance, consist of two large flour tortillas piled high with sweet lobster chunks and fluffy egg; they are accompanied by chips and salsa. The side of cheese grits comes with a bit of a conundrum: too good to share, too big not to. Another not-so-casual element? The price. Brunch for two can easily reach \$100.

**OAK LAWN**  
**PARIGI**  
 3311 OAK LAWN AVE. 214-521-0295  
 BRUNCH SERVED SATURDAY AND SUNDAY

THE CROWD IS WELL-heelled and the vibe cosmopolitan at this chic neighborhood cafe serving the well-to-do of Oak Lawn and the Park Cities (translation: the gays and the grays) for more than 25 years. Owners/chefs Janice Provost and Chad Houser and chef Rolando Garcia champion local, seasonal ingredients on their tight yet tasty brunch menu—usually six items in addition to their typical lunch menu—with choices changing biweekly. That means one visit you might indulge your sweet tooth with decadent Nutella-and-banana-stuffed French toast or classic

blueberry pancakes with walnut cinnamon butter. The next visit you might opt for a savory creation such as baby buttermilk biscuits covered in Italian sausage gravy or a sandwich of bacon, arugula, cherry tomatoes, cheese, and eggs in a flaky, buttery croissant. The people-watching is top-notch as well, with some of Dallas' best interior designers regularly frequenting Parigi. Who knows? Maybe you'll pick up a decorating tip or two.

**DEEP ELLUM**  
**CANE ROSSO**  
 2612 COMMERCE ST. 214-741-1188  
 BRUNCH SERVED SATURDAY ONLY

OWNER AND PIZZAIOLI Jay Jerrier wasn't content to turn out some of the more authentic and

delicious Neapolitan pies in Dallas. No, he also had to create a killer brunch menu. Brunch? At a pizzeria? That skepticism will quickly be muffled by a blanket of Jimmy's spicy sausage gravy. The same hot soppressata found on many of Cane Rosso's pizzas is blended with braised pork, elevating the lowly breakfast hash into something special. Yawn-inducing eggs Benedict is made memorable by replacing the usual suspects—Canadian bacon, hollandaise, an English muffin—with crispy pancetta, Calabrian chile gravy, and fried polenta cakes. Even the benign-sounding coffee and donuts is anything but. Cane Rosso serves cute powdered-sugar-coated

zeppoles—deep-fried dough balls made with ricotta—in a paper sack along with a chocolate dipping sauce. Best of all, the typically standing-room-only restaurant is much quieter on Saturday mornings, allowing for a quick start to the day. That is, at least for now.

**VARIOUS LOCATIONS**  
**BLUE MESA GRILL**  
 NORTH DALLAS, ADDISON, PLANO, SOUTHLAKE, AND FORT WORTH  
 BRUNCH SERVED SUNDAY ONLY

ALL FIVE BRANCHES OF this home-grown chain host one of the more jammed Sunday brunches in town. It runs a customer-friendly six hours, from 9 AM to 3 PM, and for those with an appetite, it represents a tremendous value. For \$17.95 (\$6.95





# I'm Gay. Therefore I Brunch.

by TODD JOHNSON

**F**OR WEEKS, OUR EDITORIAL TEAM BRUNCHED, MUNCHEDED, and debated which restaurants serve the best brunches in Dallas. But beyond whose French toast was the most *manifique* and which bacon was da (fat) bomb, one thing became clear: brunch is the gayest meal of the week. Our dining editor asked during one particularly contentious meeting, "Why is it that 80 percent of the people who I've seen at brunch are gay men?" The question was directed at me, the lone gay in the *D Magazine* village and, apparently, the resident expert on "the love that dare not speak its name."

I hadn't ever thought about it in those terms, but the question was a good one. Yes, brunch is gay. No, not the "gay" of schoolyard taunts nor the "gay" of rainbow-clad pride parades. But gay men do love to brunch. But as for why, I was stumped. So I gathered some friends at one of our favorite restaurants one Sunday to hold a focus group. After spirited discussion—and by spirited I mean fueled by Bloody Marys—I concluded the following:

**1. Brunch is effortlessly stylish.** Breakfast is for the everyman. Dinner can be showy. But brunch has a casual elegance to it. It's a challenge. You don't don your Barneys best for brunch, but it certainly deserves more than shorts, flips-flops, and a t-shirt. Unless said t-shirt is a Givenchy ribbed tank, though not in blue curacao because that was so summer 2011.

**2. At brunch, carbs are not only consumed but encouraged.** Many a six-packed gay man will push away the bread basket at dinner so as not to be judged by his fellow gym comrades (also referred to as "read for filth" in the *Official Gay Handbook*, volume four). But take that same bread, griddle it in a Madagascar vanilla-kumquat gastrique, and top it with something—anything—confited, and suddenly it's to hell with the skinny jeans and hello, elastic waistband.

**3. Brunch is the most social of meals.** At dinner, you make a reservation for perhaps four people at the most, and that's all you bring. But that brunch reservation for 10 that somehow morphed into an unexpected gaggle of 20? Yeah, that's me and my friends. Of course, we'll be happy to wait at the bar for our table. More than happy.

**4. Brunch is not for children.** You can bring kids to brunch, but they won't like it. First, kids can't wait till 11 o'clock (or later) to eat their first meal of the day. Second, kids don't like to linger, and brunch is all about taking your time. A good brunch takes an hour and a half, minimum. Most kids have trouble sitting still longer than 30 minutes. Oh, and to state the obvious: most gay men aren't encumbered by children.

**5. Brunch and cocktails are synonymous.** Let's not mince words: gay men like to drink. At brunch, cocktails are poured into slender flutes and come in a kaleidoscope of colors adorned with fruit, parasols, sparklers, and other ridiculous accessories. At dinner, no gay man would be caught dead ordering such a drink. But at brunch? They let down their guard and indulge their inner divas. And if the drink is named something silly like a Sassy Slingback? Why, yes, we'd like another round, please. Or, as my own partner, whose gayety is exceeded only by his sage wisdom, put it: "Two words: bottomless mimosas."



THE GRAPE'S RAINBOW TROUT

for kids ages 6 to 10), you get access to an enormous buffet that pairs breakfast items like eggs Benedict with Southwest dishes such as fajitas and blue-corn cheese enchiladas with red sauce. If you want meat, they have plenty of it: brisket, glazed ham, sausage, and bacon. If you want old-school casserole, they have King Ranch. But the signature is the black bean adobe pie—a sweet corn cake stuffed with smoky black beans and cheese and steamed like a tamale so it stays moist. Bypass the line at the omelet station for Tex-Mex egg options such as huevos rancheros and migas. Even with this bounty, it's hard to resist Blue Mesa's trademark chips. Bite-size portions of flan let you

sample a taste even if you didn't save room for dessert. Did we mention free mimosas and poinsettias (champagne with cranberry juice)?

**KNOX**  
**TOULOUSE CAFE AND BAR**  
3314 KNOX ST. 214-520-8999  
BRUNCH SERVED SATURDAY AND SUNDAY

IN *RATATOUILLE*, THE Pixar movie about a rat becoming a chef in Paris, the motto is anyone can cook. We beg to differ. That's why we head to Toulouse to get a French fix. The red leather booths, soft yellow walls, and hardwood floors of the dining room are inviting. But we prefer to sit on the patio, which has some of the best people-watching in town. We critique the running

GAY BRUNCH: JONATHAN CARLSON



THE GRAPE'S FRIED CHICKEN BISCUIT



TOULOUSE'S OMELET PROVENCALE



TOULOUSE CAFE

form of the athletes on the Katy Trail, diverting our attention only when New Orleans-style beignets arrive. The pastries are covered in a generous shower of powdered sugar and cooled off with cappuccino sauce (crème anglaise flavored with espresso). As the runners work on their fitness, we dive into our entrées—short rib hash with sautéed spinach, caramelized onions, two poached eggs, and hollandaise sauce; and the Omelet Provencale with ratatouille vegetables, sautéed spinach, and creamy goat cheese. If you're aiming for a healthier brunch, go for the Katy Trail Omelet, made with whipped egg whites and served with a side of fruit. Want to burn off some

calories after your decadent brunch? Not a problem, just hop on the trail. And don't worry about wearing your sweats to brunch. At Toulouse, being *très chic* is passé.

**LOWER GREENVILLE**  
**THE GRAPE**  
2808 GREENVILLE AVE. 214-828-1981  
BRUNCH SERVED SUNDAY ONLY

KNOW THIS ABOUT BRUNCH at The Grape: a reservation is not required, but you should make one anyway. The tiny dining room and patio fill up fast, and the last thing you want is to be turned away after you've already gotten a whiff of the aromas wafting out of chef/owner Brian Luscher's kitchen. When *Texas Monthly* named The Grape's classic cheeseburger—served

only at Sunday brunch and Sunday and Monday dinner—the best burger in the state in 2009, the already-popular brunch spot got a big bump in business. Depending on your taste in burgers, those *TexMo* cats just might be right, but don't put all your brunch eggs in the burger basket. The breakfast on a bun is everything breakfast should be—eggs, homemade sausage, and cheese on a huge pain au lait roll. The polenta cheese fritters are the perfect side for the table to share. And the spicy Bloody Mary—served with a Spanish olive, a chunk of sharp cheddar cheese, and a hunk of salami—could almost be a meal on its own.

**DESIGN DISTRICT**  
**MEDDLESOME MOTH**  
1621 OAK LAWN AVE. 214-628-7900  
BRUNCH SERVED SUNDAY ONLY

IT'S KNOWN FOR ITS BEER, but the Meddlesome Moth's kitchen turns out a mean brunch. The dark interior with Dallas art and the stained-glass windows from Dallas' original Hard Rock Cafe create the perfect setting to nurse a headache. (The Oak Cliff Coffee Roasters French press coffee also lifts your spirits.) The names of the brunch dishes are as well thought out as the ingredients. We especially enjoyed the Mother and Child Reunion, a fried chicken breast tenderloin topped with perfectly poached eggs on a bed of peppered grits and spicy jalapeño gravy. Once we satisfied the savory side of our palate, we turned our attention to our sweet tooth, opting for Neuske's Badass Bacon Waffles

with warm caramel apple compote and Brie fondue. The waffles have rendered Neuske's bacon in the batter and are topped with three perfectly crispy strips. As we sat eating and drinking, we watched hipsters, church-goers, and yuppies file in and out of the restaurant. We timed it just right and stuck around until it was appropriate to have a beer. It seemed like the right thing to do.

**PLANO**  
**WHISKEY CAKE**  
3601 DALLAS PKWY., PLANO. 972-993-2253  
BRUNCH SERVED SATURDAY AND SUNDAY

HERE'S A RESTAURANT located smack in the heart of the suburbs that any inner-city-dwelling hipster could love. At Plano's Whiskey Cake, the eclectic look is industrial downtown loft meets Arts and Crafts movement, and the kitchen mentality is a laudable farm to fork. Oh, and the portions are huge. Take, for instance, the steak and egg burger. It's a two-handed delicious mess with a brisket meat pressed patty, sunny-side-up egg, Muenster cheese, bacon, red chile aioli, and—deep breath—hollandaise. Rich, tangy, sweet, and peppery, it's everything you want in a burger and breakfast squished between a soft, eggy bun. Chicken and waffles—having its moment on brunch menus across North Texas—features bacon in the waffle batter and smoked chile hollandaise poured over fried chicken and scrambled eggs. No less decadent, thick-cut brioche French toast is stuffed with mascarpone, apples, cranberries, and cinnamon, then topped with toasted almonds. **D**



**Best Brunch**