

# Dining

## Lone stars

A Texas accent marks several top new restaurants of 2004

By **DOTTY GRIFFITH**  
Restaurant Critic

Last year was full of surprises. 2004 started off slowly, then restaurant openings snowballed in the fall, producing a list of new hot spots that charm, beguile, fascinate and sometimes challenge diners.

The legacy of one of Dallas' storied restaurants (the Riviera, which both reopened and closed again last year) is woven throughout the list.

Looking back 12 months or so always reveals trends. Here's one: After years of broiling and grilling, fine-dining chefs are

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again taking to frying. Many of the most interesting new dishes of 2004

come crisply battered, straight from a cauldron of bubbling oil. Is this what remains of the waning low-carb movement, which advised trading starch calories for protein and fat?

Perhaps credit (or blame?) goes to the Texas twist that several top-ranked newcomers put on their menus. After all, if there were a state recipe, it would end with "fry that sucker."

Not since Stephan Pyles' New Texas cuisine of a decade ago have so many restaurants put so much "howdy, y'all" on their menus. And they've reprised that theme with subtle sophistication.

A final note: The restaurants considered for this list were reviewed in Guide during 2004; some opened late in the previous year.

*Teresa Gubbins, Kim Harwell, Michael Hiller, Kim Pierce and Waltrina Stovall contributed to this report.*

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Sometimes, good things come in fours: George and Katie Brown's triplets, (from left) William, Clementine and Oliver, arrived in September, shortly after the year's top-rated restaurant opened.

### George

**1** Named after chef-owner George Brown, this fashion-plate restaurant is his joint venture with wife Katie Brown, the pastry chef. Their cuisine, crafted from pristine ingredients with near-flawless technique, places them in rarefied atmosphere. It's as if Mr. Brown channels his ingredients, helping them become the dishes they want to be. Respect for what's in the dish overrides any preconceived notion about how it should turn out. After a catering-only interlude, Mr. Brown's kitchen re-entry last fall

warrants the acclaim he earned in 1997 as one of *Food & Wine* magazine's best new chefs in the country. George lives up to the legacy of the location's previous incarnation, the Riviera.

7709 Inwood Road  
(south of Lovers Lane),  
214-366-9100

### Hector's on Henderson

**2** Youthful Todd Erickson blazes new trails at this high-cuisine, lowdown casual spot. The 25-year-old chef takes risks that pay off more often

than not, although occasionally execution wavers. He and owner Hector Garcia (the former front guy at the Riviera) bill the menu as Lone Star-touched American cuisine. Lunch and dinner menus are full of surprises, like candy apple crème brûlée and pumpkin tempura, that have excited and intrigued diners since the fall opening. Located in a building that once housed Potter Iron Works, the venue has historic appeal as well.

2929 N. Henderson Ave.  
(two blocks east of  
North Central Expressway),  
214-821-0432



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Candy apple crème brûlée