

Stephan Pyles' Flora Street Cafe Is a Triumphant Display of Grandeur

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BY CODY NEATHERY



Flora Street Cafe's lobster tamale pie with wild paddlefish caviar and ancho glass.

Kevin Marple

By now, it's well known that Stephan Pyles is a pioneer of modern Texas cuisine. From the beginning of Routh Street Cafe to Star Canyon and Stampede 66, his culinary impact has been felt far and wide. Many of today's brightest young chefs have honed their skills under Pyles' cunning ingenuity.

Along with success comes failure — as the saying goes, "Fall down seven times, stand up eight." We have also witnessed a handful of Pyles concepts that didn't find their niche. After the closures of highly praised Samar and San Salvaje, his newest restaurant, Flora Street Cafe, is his eighth stand, and it's absolutely bewitching.

This location in the Arts District, which opened May 31, has the bells and whistles that make fine dining a cherished event. The bar lounge at the entrance is welcoming for the after work crowd sipping cocktails, while the main room will award the evening crowd with astonishing decor and attention to detail that captivates throughout dinner.



A dazzling dining room ready to impress

Cody Neathery

Curious eyes will immediately be drawn to a skylight dropping from the ceiling that resembles a blossoming flower. Adorning the wall adjacent to the kitchen is a multi-colored silk curtain hand-sewn by Tim Harding, which so happens to be his largest display in North America. Venetian alabaster covers the interior walls. Pyles has a personal touch on every item in his Flora

Street Cafe, including the water level in each vase and a progressive bathroom for all, a first for Dallas. In the private dining room, a wall opens for diners to watch Pyle at work in the kitchen.

His menu is described as "elevated Texan," which stands to be a more sophisticated approach from his previous descriptions of "modern Texan." For this, Pyles brought on two heavy-hitters with chef de cuisine Peter Barlow and pastry chef Ricardo Sanchez. Keeping on track with the homage to Texas, the menu's bread portion was created with the help of Austin's Easy Tiger Bake Shop and Beer Garden, and the blueberry corn muffin from Routh Street found its way on the Flora Street menu.



Pyles' private dining room gives diners a peek into the kitchen.

Cody Neathery

Diners can mull over exquisite dishes like a mild smoked Marlin, a sweetly tart custard with caviar and roots vegetable salad with poblano lime dressing. For mains, Broken Arrow ranch supplies the meat for an antelope dish, complete with peach puree and empanada, that was perfect in taste and texture, a plate of pheasant that was nothing short of flavor, a pleasing halibut with tamale and the duo of pork, another standout.

Pyles has solidified his niche and while doing so, has made himself once again. Although modern Texan may now be cliché, he's accomplished two objectives with Flora Street Cafe; he can still deliver, and he's made dining at the chef's table cool again.

Flora Street Cafe, 2330 Flora St. Open for dinner nightly at 5:30 p.m.