

Best of the Best: The 5 Most Essential Stateside Gastronomic Destinations Now

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At [Flora Street Cafe](#), a stunning restaurant in Dallas's downtown Arts District, Stephan Pyles is lifting modern Texas cuisine to a new level of sophistication. The best dishes pack the punch of the Tex-Mex cooking Pyles originated in the 1980s but show a fresh, finely tuned subtlety. His lobster tamale pie is served in a delicate crystal chalice, the top covered with an ancho-dusted disk of sugar that balances a still life of flowerlike sliced pickled baby corn, wild Tennessee paddlefish roe, tiny herb leaves, and black garlic. Plunge your spoon through it, and you'll find chunks of butter-poached lobster and a rich corn custard. Pyles's beef tartare is made with 50-day, dry-aged Texas Akaushi beef amped up with wild mushrooms, pickled Fresno chilies, lime juice, and a duck egg. All of this is served in a dining room with the kind of power decor rarely seen in restaurants these days: a wall of windows and serious artwork, heavy linens and sterling silver, and an open kitchen that gives diners a front-row seat to the most exciting show in town.