



ALL UP IN HIS GRILL

At his new backyard barbecue-style restaurant, Texan Tim Love shows how much wood a top chef would stock, if a top chef could stock wood **BY JAY CHESHES**

LABOR OF LOVE
Woodshed, top, the new Fort Worth grill mecca run by chef Tim Love

AFTER THE WESTERN BISTRO, the burger joints and the old-fashioned saloon, it was only a matter of time before Fort Worth chef Tim Love, food television mainstay and grand pooh-bah of Texas cuisine, turned backyard grilling into a five-star affair. At his new al fresco restaurant, Woodshed—his fifth eatery in the city—Love is introducing Texans to barbecue writ large: Exotic woods. Smoked ice. Brisket-stuffed

piquillo peppers. Hickory-braised spelt served with a tiny, perfect quail.

Love calls the food “back-porch cooking,” but the real theme, of course, is the heating element itself. “It’s all about the wood,” he says, standing by a picnic table and surveying the logs stacked in every corner of his sprawling backyard-inspired restaurant, which opens out onto Fort Worth’s Trinity River through barn-sized garage doors. “We roast over wood, grill over wood, even braise over wood,” he says. And not just any wood, it turns

➤ out. As with wine pairings, Love's food-and-fuel combinations are intended to bring out the best in each dish.

"The same way cabernet has oak in it, our spelt has hickory," says Love, referring to the aforementioned spelt and quail dish (in which the grains are cooked with a hunk of wood right in the pan). Each type of wood is best suited to a particular job. Hickory, in general, is good for long-cooking foods. Pecan is much more delicate—"soft and sweet," he says—while mesquite "is very brash."

Love is hardly alone in embracing elemental cooking techniques, a facet of the new "manly chef" ethos, which includes foraging for and sometimes even killing your own food. In recent months, wood varieties have been elevated to the rarefied status of cheese and wine at top restaurants all over the country. At Iron Chef Jose Garces' Arizona outpost of Distrito, the food is cooked over *kiawe ono*, a type of Hawaiian mesquite used in traditional luaus. Star chef Sean Brock of Husk and McCrady's in Charleston, S.C., burns a mix of sustainable hardwood and carbonized pig bones. And at Yusho in Chicago, Matthias Merges offers a Japanese spin on the sort of high-end grilling pioneered at Asador Etxebarri in Spain—the most celebrated grill restaurant in the world—cooking even delicate ingredients like tofu, quail eggs and leeks over an open flame.

"I love doing this kind of cooking, working with wood and outdoor fires," says Love, who has run a mobile smoker during the Austin City Limits Music Festival (at which he's the official chef) since 2009. But where his smoker menu has always focused mostly on meat—often whole animals—at Woodshed he'll fire up anything from hickory-smoked artichokes to oak-smoked redfish steamed *en papillote*. Even the ice used in cocktails gets a quick pass over smoldering pecan wood. "We tried every single thing with a different wood," he says, "until we got it right."

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MOST WANTED

A Dallas cocktail inspired by a notorious former resident

Veteran barman **Eddie "Lucky" Campbell** (inset) recently launched retro cocktail den The Chesterfield in downtown Dallas, not far from the infamous grassy knoll. Here he shares a signature drink he invented while working at a bar in Oak Cliff—which happens to be the former neighborhood of one Lee Harvey Oswald.

THE OSWALD'S CORRIDOR

INGREDIENTS

- › Absinthe
- › 1 sugar cube
- › ½ oz. Punt e Mes vermouth
- › ½ oz. Cherry Heering liqueur
- › 2 oz. Maker's 46 bourbon
- › 2 pieces orange peel

1. Pour a bit of absinthe into a cocktail glass and roll to coat. Discard the excess.

2. Place the sugar cube in a mixing glass. Add the Punt e Mes and Cherry Heering. Squeeze one piece of orange peel and drop it into the mix, then add the bourbon and stir until the sugar is completely dissolved.

3. Strain into the absinthe-rinsed glass and garnish with the other peel.

Note: You can set the absinthe on fire before pouring in the rest of the drink, or simply fill the orange peel garnish with absinthe and light that instead (pictured).



THE WHOLE ENCHILADA

Dallas restaurateur Monica Greene wants folks to know there's more to Mexican than tacos and burritos

ONE OF THE BEST things about Mexican food is its adaptability—the fact that you can modify the basic premise of the taco or the burrito to accommodate almost any filling. But what of the humble enchilada? Saucy and stuffed with all sorts of toothsome ingredients, it somehow missed out on the grand universalization of Mexican food. Until, that is, Mexico City–born restaurateur Monica Greene opened Best Enchiladas Ever, which may be the country's first “enchiladeria,” a word its colorful owner insists she made up. “I Googled it and found nothing,” she says.

Already well known for Monica's Aca y Alla, a Tex-Mex spot in the Dallas neighborhood of Deep Ellum, Greene hopes her first BEE, in Oak Cliff, will eventually give rise to a full-fledged chain. She's even devised a cute logo, a cartoon bee in a sombrero, in preparation for the nationwide rollout. “It can be the Chipotle of enchiladas,” she says.

Like that fast-casual behemoth, BEE features a mix-and-match menu, allowing patrons to customize their orders with fillings like chicken *tinga* and tilapia Veracruz. But with a choice of five wrappers, nine fillings and 10 sauces, the options can seem pretty overwhelming. “There are 1,100 possible combinations,” Greene says proudly. —J.C.

THAT'S A WRAP! A chicken *tinga* enchilada with spicy chipotle crema at BEE



Batter Up!

Chicken and steak aren't the only things that are chicken-fried in Texas these days

Chicken-frying steak is surely among the most unusual of Texas cooking traditions. To do it, you need beef, seasoned flour, oil and a pan. You don't need a chicken, and you don't need any chicken products. You can chicken-fry everything in your pantry even if there isn't a chicken between your house and Mississippi. Such is the genius of chicken-frying.



PLAYING WITH FIRE

A Texas whiskey producer takes on Kentucky for the bourbon crown

They say the indigenous grain, water and climate make Kentucky the only birthplace of good bourbon. A few Texans, however,

beg to differ. Firestone & Robertson, which opened in Fort Worth this spring, is betting big on the promise of Texas *terroir*. The first whiskey producer in the north of the state—and Texas' fifth overall—it's the only distillery using Texas yeast culled from the state tree, the pecan. “We've got a very distinctly Texas product—aged in this climate, using only Texas



NO HARM, NO FOWL

Left, chicken-fried lobster surf and turf at Fearing's; inset, chef (and adventurous chicken-fryer) Dean Fearing

Some claim that chicken-fried steak was invented in Texas in the 19th century, when a Czech or German immigrant—no one's sure which—swapped beef for veal in his everyday schnitzel. Others believe it debuted later, in 1911, when greasy-spoon cook Jimmy Don Perkins confused two orders for one, combining steak and fried chicken to create a bizarre hybrid that took.

However it started, Dallas residents are today so enamored of chicken-fried food that local restaurateurs have begun applying the treatment to everything from quail eggs to mushrooms to pot roast. The mania has brought the technique to even the most high-end restaurant menus: Chicken-fried lobster tail is among the most popular items that chef Dean Fearing serves at his namesake restaurant, Fearing's, in The Ritz-Carlton. Even the dirt-cheap original has gotten an upgrade at the tony Neighborhood Services Tavern, where the chef has traded traditional cube steak for rib-eye served over horseradish mash. And to the panic of poultry everywhere, there are still places where you can find "chicken-fried chicken," which is different from regular fried chicken in that ... oh, never mind. —J.C.

ingredients," says founding partner Leonard Firestone.

The first of that homegrown bourbon went into barrels in March, and Firestone and his partner, former finance man Troy Robertson, are hoping it will be ready to bottle in the next two years. In the meantime they'll be showing off their blending skills in their first official product. Capped in boot-leather scraps and called TX, it's a mixture of whiskeys imported from, well, Kentucky. —J.C.

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