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The Belmont Restaurant & Lounge entrance and patio.

photos provided by the Belmont Restaurant & Lounge



Small Rooms, Big Tastes

By Jarrett Steele

WHETHER OR NOT YOU BELIEVE the alleged claim that our area has “more restaurants per capita” than any place else on the planet, no one can argue about the sheer multitude of sameness that exists in these dining possibilities. Consider the nearly endless string of restaurants lining Central Expressway, lit up brightly enough to be viewable from space. They offer immense parking lots, flashing coasters to signal the end of your long wait and high-capacity, high-volume dining rooms.

These aren't by any means bad restaurants, but the similarities abound. If you head just a little further north on Central, the lights of the city get dimmer, but not long after you enter the city limits of Allen, The Belmont awaits with a more sophisticated experience.

The restaurant is in an old house that is just over a century old, a two-story Queen Anne style mansion with tall ceilings and hardwood floors just down the street from the small town's historic downtown.

We ate in the Gray Room, one of the three “dining rooms” on the first floor of the house. By dining room, I mean it was not much larger than the room right

off the kitchen at your place, the room where you sit down for dinner for one or two nights out of 365, where you actually bring out the wedding china when the in-laws come to town.

Three other tables fit comfortably between minimally decorated, light gray walls and windows framed in white lace-curtain treatments. And that's it. It's an admittedly unusual experience, eating in a small room with only a few other couples nearby, but it allows for a more private, slower-paced evening dining out. On the other hand, you may not want to take a first date or someone who hates conversation.

Starting off, our delicious and crispy calamari ringlets (\$7) were teamed with a very pedestrian marinara sauce. I wasn't expecting excessive horseradish with the appetizer, but we ended up being better off not dipping. Though lacking the stinging punch we expected, the wasabi bacon-wrapped shrimp (\$10) were large, firm and juicy with a nicely grilled flavor, presented simply with a somewhat sweetened soy sauce.

At first glance, deep-fried brie (\$7) had the appearance of the super-sized fried mozzarella sticks now available

at your neighborhood bistro chain restaurant. But each bite of the wedges worked, a melting sensation combined with firm fresh apricot wedges and small cranberries in a light syrup.

The sublime butternut squash lobster bisque (\$3.25) may have been the best thing served in that small room on that Friday night. Creamy and burnt orange with a light sprinkling of chives, it yielded an abundance of lobster flavor and should not be missed.

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Steak eaters will smile, just as I did when I opened the Belmont menu. The list of entrées is heavy on the beef side and includes prime rib eyes (\$16-19) and a steak and fries selection (\$17) that was very well received at the next table. My favorite dining companion enjoyed

the eight-ounce filet mignon (\$29), topped with a buttery demi-glaze and Gorgonzola cheese pieces. Roasted fingerling potatoes complemented the cut, seared with a beautiful pink and tender center.

In my service to curious readers, I took an alternate path from the red meat (withholding the “fork in the road” reference) and was very pleased with the pan-seared halibut (\$16). Given how much I loved devouring the bisque, the relatively similar lobster sauce served on the entrée enhanced an already excellent filet. Were it not for the very large, extremely thin fried tortilla shark fin puzzlingly planted in my garlic-mashed potatoes, I would have been completely at ease missing out on a steak. The oven-baked sea bass (\$21) also appeared to be a worthy selection.

The unavailability of the graham cracker crust key lime pie was a minor disappointment; I got over it with the arrival of the white chocolate bread pudding (\$5), which featured a drizzling of Jack Daniels cream sauce and fresh berries. Spongy and moist, the large

round hunk of dessert was enough for two, although the Belmont’s hot chocolate cake could likely offer the best of both (chocolate) worlds.

Our affable server was dressed formally, but was very casual talking with us; bordering on being overly attentive. We felt a little rushed initially, but she realized that like the other couples, we were in no hurry. The Belmont has a children’s menu, but I can’t imagine bringing the kids for dinner. Dial-a-sitter instead and enjoy an intimate dining experience on Belmont Drive. Take your time; the other restaurants will light the way back home.

FORK TINES:

- The Belmont also has a small bar and lounge and a spacious wood deck patio for dining by starlight. Live jazz and other music is performed on weekend nights seasonally.
- Wine by the glass (and even by the bottle) offered unheard of value.
- “Map it” before you arrive or you’ll inevitably drive right past the side street turn and have to double-back like a flustered Fork.

The Belmont

103 W. Belmont Drive, Allen
214-547-8011
Lunch, Dinner, Sunday Brunch
Major Credit Cards Accepted
Saturday & Sunday Reservations Suggested

	Food
	Service
	Atmosphere
	Value

(scale of five forks)



Jarrett Steele is a writer living on the verge of Frisco. When his fork isn’t busy sampling new restaurants in town, you’ll find him kicking back and grilling out.



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