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Signature dish and fresh baked bread at FADI's
 photos by Chris Fritchie



Experience Frisco's International Cuisine

By Tricia Musslewhite

AS A CHILD growing up in North Texas in the '70s, my family had a weekly ritual: Saturday night enchiladas. We would pile in the Chevy station wagon, drive to El Fenix and indulge in cheese nachos, tacos and enchiladas. Perhaps my early introduction to Mexican food prepared me for a lifelong love of international cuisine. As I and the number of Tex-Mex restaurants grew, so did my palate. Today, I eagerly trade sushi rolls for enchiladas and devour pita bread and hummos with the same zeal as chips and salsa.

When you consider the history of international cuisine is also a study of migration patterns, it's not surprising that Frisco's restaurants are as diverse and burgeoning as the city's population. Along with Mexican restaurants, Italian and Chinese eateries were early on the scene, and today cuisine from around the world is as close as the next major shopping center. Even the IKEA cafeteria makes available Swedish meatballs and lingonberries. With all these restaurants come new tastes and experiences.

EXPERIENCE A HEALTHY DIET

The Mediterranean diet is known for its healthful ingredients. Fresh fruits and vegetables, fish and chicken, whole grains and unsaturated fats from nuts and olive oil are staples in Mediterranean cuisine. When you add fresh basil, oregano, mint, cilantro and garlic the result is food that is not only healthy but also delicious.

FADI'S Mediterranean Grill, located in the Centre at Preston Ridge, offers Lebanese and Greek cuisine in a unique, upscale cafeteria-style setting. If you're not familiar with such Lebanese classics as hummos and chicken shawerma, your senses will help you determine what to put on your plate as you traverse the colorful, freshly prepared salads, vegetables and meats.

The restaurant is owned and managed respectively by brothers Rabih and Wes Merched, who are related to the Dimassi family who opened the original FADI'S in Houston. The Mercheds brought their Lebanese roots and family's special recipes to Frisco to open FADI'S fourth location. Wes Merched declares it is a labor of love, saying "We serve only food that is healthy, fresh and delicious. Our tagline is 'Eat healthy. We care.' And we truly do."

EXPERIENCE THE EXPERIENCE

Life's daily challenges can often leave us desiring an escape. While an international vacation may not be practical, there are a few spots nestled in Frisco that can transport you abroad for at least a few hours.

The intersection of Legacy Drive and S.H. 121 may feel like worlds away from a private Italian villa, but visit Isabella's Italian Restaurant and discover "Italy today," which co-founder Kenyon Price describes as a blend of tradition and modern.

Mr. Price drew from a decade of experiences living and working in Italy to create Isabella's. He and business partner Craig Vaught mirrored a current trend in Italy of maintaining tradition with architecture, art,

music, food and wine, but also blending them with modern menu items, music and art. "As long as they are 'non troppo,' not too much modern," says Mr. Price.

Now, while seasonal ingredients abound, is an especially good time to visit Isabella's. A new summer salad is on the menu along with entrees that feature today's freshest vegetables. "We create a Pomodoro sauce - as tomatoes are perfect these days - but we sweeten the sauce naturally with fresh carrots as they have been doing in Italy for hundreds of years," says Mr. Price.

You don't need to brush up on your high school French to visit Bonnie Ruth's Cafe' Trottoir et Patisserie. This sidewalk café and pastry shop pays homage to the classic French bistro and brings a little



Tuna at Isabella's

photo by Chris Fritchie

piece of Paris to the Shops at Starwood. I don't know if it's the Belle Époque decor, the cozy outdoor seating or those elements combined with the bistro fare, but on a recent visit I felt like I was sitting near the Avenue des Champs-Élysées rather than the Dallas North Tollway.

A stroll down the sidewalk at the Shops at Starwood can take you across the globe to an exquisite Japanese establishment. KOTTA (pronounced coat-a) is Japanese for exquisite, and the KOTTA Sushi Lounge's decor and cuisine live up to its name.

KOTTA's Asian-inspired Zen decor relaxes and - hence the name - feels more like an intimate lounge rather than a sushi bar. In addition to sushi, KOTTA offers a full lunch and dinner menu.

EXPERIENCE THE HISTORY

Most of Frisco's restaurants are located near S.H. 121 and Preston Road and new establishments are lining the Dallas North Tollway, but you need to visit historic downtown Frisco to find a Tex-Mex restaurant rich in Mexican tradition.

With its brightly painted facade and casual interior filled with family photographs you know upon entering Manny's Tex-Mex Grill you are about to experience true Mexican culture. The restaurant is family-owned and the recipes are decades old, giving authenticity to an establishment competing with the big chains.

Manny's is named for Manny Ramos. He and brother-in-law Richard Galvan left their own restaurant concepts to team up and open Manny's Tex-Mex Grill in 2000. Because these

restaurateurs have been serving their recipes for almost 35 years, the food is authentic, consistent and fine-tuned. "Manny is well-versed in the recipes. You can even find him in the kitchen," says Mr. Galvan

A ROYAL EXPERIENCE

Frisco does not have a British dining establishment but West Plano is home to a Brit who knows his way around the kitchen - royal kitchens to be exact. "The Royal Chef" Darren McGrady was a private chef to Diana, Princess of Wales, and her sons from 1993 to 1997. For 11 years prior to that he was a chef in the Royal Kitchen at Buckingham Palace where he cooked for the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh. After Princess

Diana's death, Mr. McGrady fulfilled a desire to move to the United States and went, as he likes to say, "from the Palace to Dallas."

For more than nine years Mr. McGrady, whose children attend Frisco schools, has been the private chef for Dallas residents Dee and Charles Wyly. In 2003, Mr. McGrady also started teaching cooking classes, sharing his recipes, palace stories, humor and practical tips so North Texas families can eat royally in their own homes. That's when an idea struck and a cookbook was born. "Eating Royally: Recipes and Remembrances from a Palace Kitchen" (Thomas Nelson, \$24.99) was released in July to mark the tenth anniversary of Diana's death and continue Mr. McGrady's support of causes Diana supported.

"The Royal Chef" Darren McGrady was a private chef to Diana, Princess of Wales, and for 11 years prior was a chef in the Royal Kitchen at Buckingham Palace.

"I have donated my advance and royalties to the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation in support of two of Diana's charitable goals: children and AIDS," says Mr. McGrady. "I like to think, if she were alive today, the princess would be amazed that giving away some recipes would raise so much money."

Just as Frisco is lacking in a British eatery, Mr. McGrady says you won't find a Tex-Mex restaurant in England. So I asked the royal chef what a British restaurant on this side of the pond should serve. Mr. McGrady laughs as he says, "Good fish and chips and mushy peas and a traditional Sunday dinner of standing rib roast with Yorkshire pudding – all in Texas-sized portions!" Better yet, support a good cause, pick up a copy of his book and eat royally at home.

Tricia Musslewhite is a freelance writer living in Frisco.

The logo for Frisco Style Magazine features a red square on the left containing the stylized white letters 'FSM'. To the right of the square, the word 'frisco' is written in a cursive script, and 'STYLE MAGAZINE' is written in a bold, sans-serif font.

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