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*Mama Emilia's shrimp tortellini*  
photo by Chris Frutchie



## Ladies Progressive Dinner

By Shannon Crain

**LAST MONTH** the ladies of *Frisco STYLE Magazine* decided to have a “Girls will be Girls” night out. No gimmicks, no foolish hats, just good wine, good food and good company. I felt a little like we were about to do the dinnertime version of *The View*, minus Rosie O’Donnell, because of our comradery and our ‘progressive’ ages. There is no reason to put labels on everyone, but I was pretty comfortable being the Elisabeth Hasselbeck of the group, clearly the youngest and possibly the most conservative. Of course, Leah, Beth, Liz and I all had different places in mind for our night without the guys, but it was Liz who suggested we go to each one and thus our progressive dinner was born. We had appetizers, dinner and dessert at three different venues to

enjoy the best that Plano, McKinney and Frisco had to offer, all in one night.

The evening began with wine and appetizers at Cru, a wine bar in the Shops at Legacy. The crisp night air, sparkling lights and bustling crowds seemed to promise a fun-filled yet relaxing evening. Imagine our disappointment when we approached the outdoor patio only to be told that we would not be able to order off the whole menu or sit inside because there was a private party in progress. This was hitch number one, but we actually wanted to be outside and since we weren’t ordering entrees, we brushed it off. Nothing a little wine couldn’t help. That is until we received three different menus: a wine list the length of a small novel, a wine flight

menu and a food menu. It is a wine bar, I get it, but I have never been particularly fond of a place where I have to ask the waitress how to order. The menu took away from the terrific ambiance because it was more confusing than helpful. The flights were priced anywhere between \$16-18 for three 2-ounce samples while wines by the glass were priced in the \$8-20 range. I will say that our waitress was more than happy to help us and seemed to know what she was talking about. We all ended up ordering a glass instead of a flight (a sample of three different wines) because we all knew how to do that without requiring a tutorial. We also ordered a five-cheese pizza for our appetizer.

Things started to look up once the wine arrived. We ended up laughing at crazy things like me wearing two left 3-inch heel pumps to work last week, meeting Beth’s teenage son’s girlfriend from Highland Park and the fact that Leah’s husband took three years to tell her he loved her while they were dating (a little Ross Geller syndrome if you will). By the end of my glass of Shiraz, “The Lackey” from South Australia, my take on Cru lifted a bit. Now, I am not going to pretend I know much about a good Shiraz. I tried it because I wanted something different from my usual glass of Pinot Grigio. I was pleasantly surprised by the full bodied texture and the fruity taste. Beth went for a Chardonnay from the Robert Stemmler “Estate” which she felt was nice and clean with a buttery taste. Leah had the August Briggs petite Sirah. Other than surprising her by being chilled, she enjoyed her selection. Liz chose the Pinot Grigio Lungarotti, which she felt she would have enjoyed something a bit less woody, but appreciated its smooth texture. The group consensus on the pizza was that it was nothing to go on about. We were hungry, it fed us. The whole experience was a bit overpriced for four glasses of wine and a pizza, but sitting on the patio made for a nice evening. I would go back to try again

because I felt like Cru was not giving it their best because of the private party, then again the prices mean they should be giving it their all every night.

Moving on....We all climbed in the new mom's mini van and headed to Mama Emilia's off the square in McKinney. From the moment we walked in the atmosphere was incredibly inviting with dark wood walls, white table cloths and low lighting. Basically, it would make for the ideal date location or nice evening out. Our sassy and attentive waiter welcomed us and got right to work on suggested entrees. I ordered the shrimp tortellini, which looked as great as it tasted, just the right combination of shrimp, pasta and red peppers. Beth had the Eggplant Parmesan (\$11.95) that consisted of thick slices of eggplant, which is not typical, but was quite satisfying. Liz had the Chicken and Shrimp Calebrease (\$16.95) on top of a bed of fettuccine saying, "The noodles were under cooked but the entree as a whole was very well presented and enjoyable." Leah's only complaint was that her honey roasted pork chops (\$17.95) were over cooked compared to the last time she had it, but nonetheless she enjoyed her meal. Overall, I would say that Mama Emilia's remains a McKinney mainstay because of its impeccable service, magnificent ambiance and delicious menu options. The pricing was very reasonable considering the size of the portions and how much we enjoyed our experience. The girls and I agreed that Wednesday night may not be as crowded allowing diners to avoid the long waits on a weekend thus creating a more intimate atmosphere in the restaurant.

For our final stop, we met Becky, another female staff member of *Frisco STYLE Magazine*, at Isabella's on Legacy for something sweet to round out the night. There was a cozy fire going outside and inside the restaurant was busy, but not to the point of being over crowded. This is the kind of place that has old world Italian charm with a modern city twist, which made the interior welcoming and trendy without being cold. Our waiter was out-going and friendly from the get go. We told him we were there for



dessert and he promptly brought out the dessert tray. Leah went for the chocolate tart saying, "I always get the chocolate or I am disappointed." She got her wish and enjoyed the chocolate torte which I found to be delicious as well. Beth went with the tiramisu, ladyfingers dipped in espresso and layers of mascarpone cream, which the entire table agreed was one of, if not the best tiramisu they'd ever tasted. Becky even admitted she liked it when she is not a regular fan of tiramisu. Liz went with the specialty of the evening, pumpkin cheesecake, and relished every bite. Since it was the end of the night, our friendly waiter gave us a complimentary *Torta de Mele*, an Italian take on apple pie, with "Pasta Frolla" crust and pastry crème inside. We enjoyed our desserts so much that each one of us took one home to the boys. We had to treat them in some way considering we left them all home while we had our fun. Each item was about \$6.50, which was easy on the wallet in comparison to our stint at Cru

earlier in the evening. The dessert at Isabella's was as Liz said, "A great finish to a wonderful dinner." It's safe to say it was the highlight of our night.

Our progressive dinner was a success as the purpose of a girl's night out to laugh and relax was achieved. Cru started off rocky, but we are fun-loving and made the best of the confusing over-priced wine selection. Because who isn't happy with a glass of wine and good friends to joke with? Mama Emilia's was elegant and had delicious food and the ride back from McKinney was filled with even more laughs. Our desserts made the night what it was for two reasons: one, because they were amazing and two, Becky was able to join in on the fun. We are considering doing a beer tasting next so look forward to hearing about what we try and whether we liked it because, believe me, we will let you know.

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