HEATHER PRAY WITH THE HOUSTON DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE IS IN THE CENTER OF IT ALL.

9AM: STOP AT JOE MUGG’S AT BOOKS-A-MILON FOR A LATTE.
12PM: TWEET FRIENDS TO MEET AT GUADALAJARA DEL CENTRO FOR LUNCH.
1PM: STOP IN AT BCBGMAXAZRIA...SO MANY SHOES, SO LITTLE TIME.
6PM: COCKTAILS AT THE FOUNDATION ROOM.
1AM: SLEEP AND REPEAT.

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Instead of a major summer vacation, spend less on a “staycation” in Houston and focus on all that downtown has to offer.

Our absolute musts for summer.

What’s buzzworthy in the city center.

 Recycling decoded – the basics.

Downtown dwellers – walking tall. BY SANDRA COOK

Downtown on the rocks – mixology. BY ALLISON BAGLEY

Show highlights of the upcoming theater season.

BY HEATHER PRAY

Houston’s other “black gold” – Lola Savannah Coffee Company. BY SANDRA COOK

Recycling decoded – the basics.

Your guide to downtown dining.

Questions or comments?
Drop us a line at dtmagazine@downtowndistrict.org

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Published by:
Summertime...

And the living is easy. So why not forget about the hassle of a major summer vacation and instead focus on all that downtown has to offer. We know, you’re skeptical about the whole idea of a “staycation” but we promise – it’s an idea whose time has come (especially when we’re talking about downtown Houston).

Really, wouldn’t it be easier to spend a weekend in a lovely little boutique hotel in your hometown than to drain your bank account and your patience with a long-distance trek. Why not use this issue of Downtown Magazine as your own personal travel guide? We promise not to steer you wrong.

From the DockDogs competition at Discovery Green to Cirque du Soleil at Toyota Center, the summer is filled with quirky public events and blockbuster shows. And, of course, when it comes to dining, it’s hard to match Houston’s restaurant scene. As Trip McMurrey makes clear in this quarter’s feature, the Bayou City has some of the biggest names in the food biz and our “Best of” listing makes it oh-so-easy to find everything from the gooiest chocolate cake to the most creative cocktail.

Downtown has changed dramatically in a very short time and we’re proud to be a part of it. We hope you’ll continue to use this magazine as your resource for everything that makes our city special. And as always, keep those comments and suggestions coming!

Bob Eury
DOWNTOWN DISTRICT

Andrew Huang
HOUSTON DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE

ON THE COVER
The Grove’s Executive Chef Ryan Pera specializes in fresh, seasonal American rustic cuisine. With a rooftop garden just steps away from the kitchen, he infuses homegrown herbs, veggies and chili peppers into many of his dishes. The Calamari Bruschetta is a summer special mixed with kumquats, herbs, sliced serranos, orange segments, red chili flakes and served over toasty bread.
**POOLSIDE R&R ➤**

**SO CLOSE TO HOME, SO FAR AWAY**

You don’t have to plan for a big summer vacation. The Four Seasons’ My Pool’s Better Than Your Pool Pass is available every Saturday, Sunday and holiday through the summer. Just $20 per person gives you full-day access to the pool and all its services, including valet parking and doting pool attendants (they spritz you with Evian every hour!). For an extra-charge, of course, you can enjoy mini poolside spa treatments and the bar and grill. No room night required but you might be too relaxed to leave. Just pick up the phone and make your reservation.

Four Seasons, 1300 Lamar. 713.652.6219. foursseasons.com

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**ECLECTIC EXPERIENCE ➤**

**Meet your new tour guide**

Take to the streets with Dan Workman, owner of Houston’s famed Sugar Hill Studios. Workman’s upbeat, fun insider’s look into downtown Houston takes you to historic gateways, offbeat sites and local watering holes. Hear behind-the-scenes stories and personal anecdotes from local personalities. Soak up the diverse and sometimes quirky environment that makes up downtown. Your experience will be completely unexpected and leave you asking “who knew?” Download the Ultimate Downtown Audio Walking Tour to your iPod or MP3 player for free at houstondowntown.com

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**BASEBALL + HOT DOGS... ➤**

**Get in mah belly**

All You Can Eat Thursdays are back at Minute Maid Park. For just $35 during every Thursday home game you can sit in the designated All You Can Eat section and enjoy your favorite ballpark fare including unlimited hot dogs, nachos, popcorn, peanuts, soda and water. Fans will be allowed four items per person per visit at the designated concession stand and service will run until the middle of the 7th inning. Bring the family and your appetite. Go to astros.com for more info on this and other great ticket deals.

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**BACKYARD PARTY ➤**

**Watermelons, margaritas and music**

Last Concert Cafe is a Houston institution, and thanks to their always-closed red door it’s pretty much the closest you can get to a speakeasy in the 21st century. A great place to enjoy live music, margaritas and Tex-Mex food, their annual Watermelon Festival really makes the most of Last Concert’s backyard stage. The doors open at 2 on Saturday, July 25 and the festivities will include at least a dozen local bands. Admission is $15, with kids under 10 free. Proceeds benefit 90.1 KPFT Pacifica Radio.

Last Concert Cafe, 1403 Nance. 713.226.8563. lastconcert.com

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**ART AUCTION ➤**

**LUCK OF THE DRAW**

One of the hottest parties of the summer is also your chance to become a genuine art collector. More than 200 works by international artists will be on display for DiverseWorks’ Luck of the Draw 8: Attack of the DiverseWorks Summer Auction! The premise is simple. After a preview of the exhibition, tickets will be drawn by random. The luck of the draw determines in what order the ticket holder will get to choose a piece of art for purchase. Advance art chance tickets or general admission tickets are available online.

DiverseWorks, 1117 E. Freeway. 713.223.8346. diverseworks.org

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houstondowntown.com
summer 2009

LIGHTS, CAMERA, 
ACTION

Whether you’re interested in Houston’s quirky, out-of-the-way gems or big attractions like Houston Grand Opera, Buffalo Bayou, the Houston Astros and Miller Outdoor Theater, you’ll want to set your DVR for Sunday, June 21. The Downtown District, Convention & Entertainment Facilities Department and ABC Ch. 13 are partnering on a new 30-minute, quarterly television special designed to introduce viewers to downtown Houston by spotlighting the people, places and stories that make it unique. The special airs at 10:35 p.m. and you’ll also be able to view segments at abc13.com and houstondowntown.com. Don’t miss it.

A new place to work out

Construction on the new downtown Tellepsen Family YMCA is underway and on track for completion in 2010. The 120,000 square-foot facility will replace the aging building that has welcomed Houston families for 67 years. As the second-largest operating YMCA of greater Houston it will serve more than 10,000 members and will feature additional exercise rooms, a chapel, a woman’s wellness center, daycare area and more. Designed by Kirksey, the distinctive new downtown YMCA will display the story of the Tellepsen family’s history and long involvement with the YMCA and will feature 13,000 square feet of strength and cardio space with state of the art equipment; a suspended running track and an indoor swim center with natural light from extensive windows.

NEW NEIGHBORS

Hess Corporation will relocate from Allen Center to their new home at Discovery Tower, 1501 McKinney (to be renamed Hess Tower), in 2011. Next to Discovery Green, the new 29-story building is the first LEED Gold certified office in the construction phase downtown, during which Hess has been able to customize many of the design aspects specifically for their needs.

“At not only are we able to deliver what will be one of the most recognizable buildings in Houston’s skyline, but we are also fortunate to secure a company that contributes significantly to Houston’s employee base and economy as the building’s sole tenant,” said Aaron Thielhorn with developer Trammell Crow Company.

At first glance, the 40,000-square-foot pool deck smack dab in the middle of downtown Houston might seem like an unlikely urban mirage, but the palm tree-laden eighth floor resort at One Park Place is just the latest head-turning amenity to be unveiled at the gleaming new high rise at 1400 McKinney.

In addition to a 24-hour gym, state-of-the-art club house, screening room, 24-hour concierge service and valet parking – among many other five-star features – the 37-story tower is giving the city’s urban core a fresh look at the big-city lifestyle. Houston’s young professionals, empty-nesters and the culturally-minded are starting to catch on to the pleasures of living, working, walking and playing in the middle of it all, and One Park Place is a huge part of that change. For leasing info, visit oneparkplacehouston.com or call 713.868.5933.

BuilDing better

A tip of the hat to Houston, which along with 12 other cities, was placed on Fast Company’s honor roll for exemplary initiatives to improve neighborhoods, transform lives and help build a better city for the future. Houston got its nod for, what else, Discovery Green. The project, which has exceeded all attendance expectations, transformed a stretch of cement and a small patch of green into the 12-acre, $122 million jewel in the heart of downtown. If you haven’t explored Discovery Green, you’re really missing out. Year-round programming includes everything from exercise classes to outdoor films to a weekly farmer’s market.
With all of today’s concern about the environment and climate change, recycling is one of the easiest things you can do to make a difference. What isn’t always easy is getting it right! Your first step is decoding all the available information. Don’t forget, just because your plastic bottle has that little triangular symbol and number (known as a resin identification code) on its bottom doesn’t mean you can just toss it in a bin.

Did you know?
Recycling one aluminum can saves enough energy to run a computer for three hours. • It takes 70 percent less energy to produce a ton of paper from recycled paper than from trees. • Recycling one glass jar saves enough energy to light a 100-watt bulb for four hours. • The average office worker uses 10,000 sheets of paper each year.

WHAT DOES THE CITY OF HOUSTON RECYCLE?
Every city has its own recycling program so check with your municipality for their rules.

- Plastic bottles and jugs marked with no. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 7
- Newspapers
- Office paper
- Telephone books
- Unwanted mail
- Magazines and catalogs
- Aluminum, tin and steel cans
- Glass food and beverage bottles and jars
- Cardboard boxes (yes, cereal boxes are OK, but be sure to remove the inside bag)

Still need help?
The City staffs a recycling hotline to answer all your questions. Call 713.837.9130 or 311. Of course, you can always go online for more info: greenhoustontx.gov and houstontx.gov/solidwaste/index.html
Michael Walton and Brent Louther moved into the Bayou Lofts in early 2003. Converted into residences in the late 1990s, this true “hard loft” building was first built in 1910 for the Southern Pacific Railroad Company.

Freedom from traffic and yard work motivated this pair to relocate from the Heights to downtown. Walton, who works in the Medical Center, much prefers riding the METRORail to driving his car to work, not to mention the parking relief. With the rail line underway at the time of their loft purchase, Walton knew he would take advantage of the mass transit options downtown.

Louther works in the Memorial City area, so his commute is thankfully against I-10’s heavy traffic. Louther also relishes walking to downtown restaurants for dinner or coffee. “Even in the Heights we were always jumping in the car,” he says.

Do they cook much? Walton quips: “We dust the stove.”

“I hate to admit it,” Louther adds. “We don’t cook often. There’s a Cuban place around the corner, El Rey Tacqueria, that has $1 tacos. Or if you want to go upscale there are many varieties to choose from and it’s just a matter of walking.”

When the pair entertains friends, they frequently have drinks and appetizers at their place and then walk down the block for dinner.

Walton and Louther regularly take advantage of entertainment options that are within blocks of their home. “We’re big-time Theater District fans,” says Walton. “We love going to the music venues, too.”

“Some nights we’ll come home from work, change into jeans and walk over to the Alley Theatre for their current show,” says Louther.

Since becoming downtown residents, Walton and Louther have realized that they had been missing a great deal of downtown’s character as they cruised by in their cars. “When you just drive by you miss so much,” says Louther. “You get to read all the historical markers and interesting signage when you’re on foot,” remarks Walton. “You have to park the car and get out and explore the lovely spaces like La Carafe and Market Square Bar & Grill,” Walton says.

Knowing the neighbors is a different experience downtown, too. “We were friendly with our Heights neighbors, but we’re much closer now with our neighbors in the building,” says Louther. “What we thought we’d be giving up by moving into a building like this turned out to be just the opposite.”

It seems a good crowd of Bayou Lofts residents congregates in the building’s lobby for coffee on Saturday mornings.

The guys enjoy downtown’s green spaces as well, working in park time quite often, especially at Discovery Green. “We find ourselves hanging out there a lot.” Their standard poodle Atticus gets to frolic daily at Discovery Green’s dog park and does seem well-adjusted to his downtown lifestyle. “He has a good social life,” says Louther. “Crowds, horses, trains, sirens don’t bother him at all,” adds Walton.

Any other benefits of downtown living? “Jury duty is an easy walk,” chimes Walton. “You get to keep your $6 instead of handing it over for parking.”
Downtown on the Rocks

Italian imbibing
Ahmet Dalyan at the Four Season Hotel’s Q BAR has a reputation for remembering drink orders. Months will go by between a customer’s visits, and Dalyan will dazzle the patron by shaking up an extra dry martini upon his return. “It’s important to remember what people like – that’s what makes them come back,” says the affable bartender. Dalyan has seen more requests for classic cocktails, saying some has seen more requests for the affable bartender. Dalyan makes them come back,” says Dalyan.

Mend a hem, make a friend
Family-owned for three generations, Duke of Hollywood Tailors added CHARBAR a few years ago. Proprietor Michael Shapiro, always at the ready with a measuring tape around his neck, named the bar for his daughter Charlien. He mixes drinks in front of black and white photos that chronicle the history of the family.

Shake up the scene
Still a newcomer to the downtown scene, RESERVE 101 boasts more than 120 types of whiskey. Bartender Stephanie Sanders says happy hour revelers call up classic whiskey cocktails like the Sazerac. She adds that the hot spot is the only place in Texas where Scotch lovers will find Johnnie Walker’s Blue Label King George and bourbon drinkers can sip Happy Van Winkle. The diverse clientele ranges in age and owned tailor shop, where traders and executives get measured on their way home.

A little louder
The swank Q BAR restaurant and bar, housed in the historic Hotel Icon, has embraced the curve. The 360-degree, cherrywood bar is the perfect set-up for the after-work flirt or deal, and has become one of Houston’s best spots for pretty people watching. Paying homage to another set of beautiful curves, mix master Roberto Sanchez created the Scarlett Jo. The signature drink is named for screen siren Scarlett Johansson. It’s said SoCo is her favorite liquor. The skilled bartenders often recommend liquors to pair with the much-lauded menu creations of chef Michael Kramer. The Agave Splash (Don Julio 1942 tequila and agave nectar) is a match for fish and chips, they say. And the popular Skyline Martini (Ciroc vodka and fresh lychee puree) accompanies the halibut well.

Bottoms up!

Reserve 101’s specialty drinks are all the rage.

Along with a long list of whiskeys, martinis are also a specialty of the house. Of late, Bellini, black cherry and caramel apple martinis are hip sips.

MIXOLOGY AT HOME

Try your hand at two tasty downtown drinks.

THE QUATTRO SIP at the Four Seasons

1.5 oz Absolut Citron
1 oz Tuaca
1/2 oz or heavy splash of dry vermouth
1 oz sweet and sour

Squeeze lemon wedge in martini glass before pouring cocktail. Discard lemon wedge. Add cocktail mixture. Finish with a floating orange wheel.

SCARLETT JO at Voice

Fresh raspberries, blueberries and blackberries
2 oz. Southern Comfort
Splash of soda
Pinch of fresh-squeezed lemon juice and lime juice

Top fresh muddled berries with a splash of soda, Southern Comfort, juices and ice. Stir and serve.

houstondowntown.com 7
After two years of playing to sold-out audiences, the reinvention of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein’s prize-winning musical, *South Pacific*, makes its way to the Hobby Center, March 9–21, 2010 with Theatre Under The Stars. Based on James Michener’s Pulitzer Prize-winning *Tales of the South Pacific* and featuring beloved songs, “I’m Gonna Wash That Man Right Outa My Hair,” and “Some Enchanted Evening,” this is definitely a tale for the ages. Following up on the run of last season’s hit *Les Miserables*, TUTS brings the international sensation and stunning dramatic spectacle of *Miss Saigon* to the theater district. With soaring songs and roaring production numbers, you’ll love this epic and daring pop opera on stage February 9–21, 2010. *Cirque du Symphony* brings performance art to epic proportions with Houston Symphony in late May 2010. Bigger and better than ever, this exhilarating marriage of symphonic music to artistry, balance and strength will knock your socks off.

**TRUE ICONS**

Stanton Welch, artistic director of Houston Ballet, and Houston Ballet share a 40th birthday this year. Highlights of this milestone year include a new production of the 19th century classic, *La Bayadere*. Welch puts his own spin on this exotic ballet by Marius Petip by adding just a touch of Bollywood. But don’t expect him to “Bolly-fy” the famous *Kingdom of Shades* section. The Act III dance for 32 is one of the purest forms of ballet-blanc or white tutu ballets and has survived all these years unlike the majority of the choreography. Edoardo Miller, a veteran of many of Europe’s leading opera houses as well as The Metropolitan Opera and Chicago Lyric Opera, leads Houston Grand Opera’s sparkling folktale of one of Donizetti’s most popular operas, *The Elixir of Love*. Named “the finest choreographer the British modern-dance scene has ever known” by The New York Times, Richard Alston brings his company to Houston for the first time through Society for the Performing Arts on October 16. Music plays a vital part in the company’s identity and he has used a diverse range of composers including Brahms, Britten, Hoagy Carmichael, Monteverdi, Rameau, Shostakovich and Stravinsky.
SUPERSTARS

Christoph Eschenbach visits Houston after eight years with pianist Lang Lang for an electrifying performance with the Houston Symphony on April 14, 2010. Conductor Michael Krajewski leads the five-part harmony vocal group Rockapella and the symphony with hits of the 60s and 70s like Rock the Boat and Here Comes the Sun. Ultra-hip bassist, vocalist and composer Esperanza Spalding, blessed with uncanny instrumental chops, a multilingual voice that is part angel and part siren, and a natural beauty that borders on the hypnotic, makes her first Da Camera jazz series appearance. Da Camera presents acclaimed leading cellist of our time Steven Isserlis in a dramatic program evoking 100 years of romantic music featuring works by Chopin, Schumann and Samuel Barber. Talented trumpeter and HSPVA-grad Brandon Lee also makes his Da Camera debut in March 2010 on the heels of the release of his first album, From Within. Another legend makes his way to Houston through Society for the Performing Arts when they present the single most important composer/lyricist to work in American musical theater during the second-half of the 20th century. Stephen Sondheim will join New York Times columnist and former chief drama critic Frank Rich for an evening of conversation on October 25. Original Broadway stars Ashley Brown and Gavin Lee bring the world’s most famous nanny, Mary Poppins, to Houston for one of its first national tour stops with Broadway Across America, October 22-November 8. American Idol’s Taylor Hicks is the one you will want when the Tony-award nominated revival of Grease rolls into town, September 8-20. Hicks plays Teen Angel in this TUTS production. Internationally acclaimed soprano Amanda Roocroft makes her Houston Grand Opera debut as the obsessive and protective Governess in Opera Australia’s production of the Britten operatic thriller The Turn of the Screw. Lief Ove Andsnes, named Vanity Fair’s ‘Best of the Best in 2005’, debuts with his latest collaboration centered around Mussorgsky’s epic piano suite Pictures at an Exhibition with a video installation by South African artist Robin Rhode with SPA in November.

LEGENDS

Houston Symphony brings American icon Kenny Rogers on November 5. The original Jersey boy, Frankie Valli, returns with the Four Seasons in February to sing live with the symphony. Another blast from the past includes Dreamgirl Mary Wilson of the Supremes. Gilberto Gil, Brazil’s internationally acclaimed guitarist and vocalist, brings his unique sound by way of Society for the Performing Arts to Houston on March 26, 2010. Legendary jazz saxophonist Charles Lloyd visits in October with his quartet boasting Houston natives Jason Moran and Eric Harland. Legendary Canadian mezzo-soprano Judith Forst, sings the role of the Countess in Richard Jones’s unforgettable award-winning vision of Tchaikovsky’s haunting tale of obsession featuring imaginative puppets and mixed-period costumes in The Queen of Spades in the Houston Grand Opera spring repertory. Two legendary stars round out the spring with SPA when Broadway stars Marvin Hamlisch and actor Joel Grey appear together for a one-of-a-kind concert experience.
**TIMELESS CLASSICS**

Timeless classics are typically something for the whole family to enjoy. Broadway Across America brings Mel Brooks’ *Young Frankenstein* to life May 25–June 6, 2010. BAA also will present the musical for everyone who’s ever had a dream with *A Chorus Line* (January 5–17, 2010), the longest-running American Broadway musical ever. Nothing will make you feel better than a true classic like *Theatre Under The Stars’* *Meet Me in St. Louis* with *The Trolley Song* and the beloved classic *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas*. Winner of five Oscars, including Best Picture and one of only four to also win Broadway’s Best Musical Tony Award, *The Sound of Music* will bring an uplifting feel to Houston’s holiday season with TUTS December 8–20. Rounding out the Houston Grand Opera season is Nicholas Hytner’s extraordinary production of one of Handel’s most popular operas, *Xerxes*, which won the Laurence Olivier Award when it was seen at the English National Opera. *Bowfire* returns with Society for the Performing Arts for a theatrical holiday production featuring a Celtic Christmas, multicultural music-making, step dancing by world-class, award-winning performers and favorites such as *Sleigh Ride* and *Silent Night*. It doesn’t get any more classic than the Band of Irish Guards, though, when SPA brings them to Houston for one night only. Houston Symphony always brings the classics to the stage, presenting Tchaikovsky’s *Fifth Symphony*, Mahler, Shostakovich, Franck, Berlioz, and more. They also have an excellent family series featuring *The Wizard of Oz, The Twelve Days of Christmas*, music from *Beauty & the Beast* and much more. Houston Symphony continues its all-day musical experiences with Schubert. Music Director Hans Graf will lead you on a journey of this magnificent composer’s life on March 13, 2010.

Jennifer Koh plays Modern Virtuosos with Da Camera on November 17, 2009.

**BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND**

David Sedaris starts this list of extremely popular performances in Houston. A *Society for the Performing Arts* and Houston favorite, Sedaris returns to dish out his trademark satire in hilarious doses for one night only on April 28, 2010. A special engagement of *Wicked* lands in Houston June 30–July 25, 2010. You won’t want to miss the musical that broke house records and sold out in record time the two previous times it toured here. *Houston Ballet* kicks off its 2009–2010 season in September by bringing back Sir Kenneth MacMillan’s beautiful full-length *Manon* with its drama of love, sex and corruption. Representing the new face of Fado, international superstar *Mariza* brings her stunning vocal range and acoustic seven-piece ensemble to Jones Hall on November 12 with SPA. *STOMP*, the group of U.K. street performers that grew into an international percussion sensation, makes a triumphant return to Houston for four performances on Valentine’s Day weekend with SPA. *Hannu Lintu* electrified audiences in...
May 2008 and returns with the Houston Symphony in March 2010 with poetic soundscapes, relentless drumbeats and volcanic climaxes of his fellow Scandinavians’ music. Also back by popular demand with Houston Symphony is Pink Martini. Their refreshing blend of classical, jazz, Latin and Parisian cabaret music is always fun and fresh.

**PREMIERES**

Melissa Gilbert, who played Laura Ingalls Wilder for 10 years in the much-loved television series, continues her legacy as “Ma” in the Houston premiere of *Little House on the Prairie* with Theatre Under The Stars, April 28–May 9, 2010. Broadway Across America presents several Houston premieres including *In the Heights*, winner of four 2008 Tony Awards including Best Musical. Latin beats, hip-hop music and Spanish lyrics help make this the next chapter of the classic American story with an amazing cast and a thrilling score from April 6–18, 2010. Houston Symphony presents a world premiere cast of world-class acrobats, athletes and musicians and one-of-a-kind artists to turn the Hobby Center into an imaginative, colorful metropolis with the premiere of *Cirque Dreams Illumination*. You will marvel as these city dwellers transform the ordinary into extraordinary February 23–March 7, 2010. Celebrated New Zealand tenor Simon O’Neill leads a stellar cast in the title role of Wagner’s mystical, romantic *Lohengrin*. The new Houston Grand Opera co-production with Grand Theatre de Geneve was labeled “visual poetry” by The London Financial Times and the Associated Press. Houston Grand Opera also brings a specially created production of the timeless classic *Tosca* featuring Patricia Racette. Houston Symphony brings the first performance in America of *Der Rosenkavalier - Film and Music* to the stage. For decades the film was thought lost until a recent painstaking reconstruction. Watch this charming silent film while Hans Graf and the symphony unite it with Strauss’ dazzling orchestral score September 25, 26 and 27.

**KEEP COOL IN THE HOUSTON THEATER DISTRICT THIS SUMMER**

Houston Symphony presents their *Summer in the City* series with five concerts, including the Houston premiere of *The Blue Planet Live!* and the world premiere of *GamerMusicon’09*, a celebration of cutting-edge video game music industry with two concerts and an interactive festival. Other highlights include the Music of Star Trek and More Sci-Fi on July 9, Houston Chronicle Dollar Concert (yes, you can see a concert for only one dollar!) on July 12. Bringing down the house and summer season will be *The Music of Abba* on July 25.

**BEFORE WE GO…**

Don’t miss one of the summer’s biggest events. You can get the best deals on upcoming season subscriptions during the Houston Theater District Open House. The family day features performances from the theater district groups, performances, fun and the best deals of the year. Save the date: Sunday, August 30, 1–4.

**Stanton Welch**, artistic director of Houston Ballet, and **Houston Ballet** share a 40th birthday.

with *The Planets - An HD Odyssey* featuring state-of-the-art definition images from NASA with Holst’s exciting score. Houston Ballet brings Houston premieres of Jerome Robbins’s *Fancy Free*, George Balanchine’s *Ratto Della Regina*, and Jiri Kylian’s *Falling Angels*. Young choreographic talents Trey McIntyre (formerly Houston Ballet’s choreographic associate) and Aszure Barton present their companies as part of the Society for the Performing Arts Dance Series. Broadway Across America brings a dazzling international...
Perri Gallatin works the roaster—producing approximately 900 pounds of coffee daily—all by hand.

**HOUSTON’S OTHER Black Gold**

For Lola Savannah Coffee Company, the future is bright with a mild acidity.

*BY SANDRA COOK*
THE ENERGY INDUSTRY MAY keep the world’s machines in motion, but coffee fuels many of us mere mortals. While the coffee industry has been brewing in Houston for more than 60 years, the city’s coffee-profile got a huge kick in 2003, when the Port of Houston became one of only four coffee exchange ports in the nation. This means green coffee (unroasted beans), which is bought and sold on the New York Board of Trade, can be stored and distributed in Houston. Worldwide, coffee beans are the top export for dozens of countries. And, among natural commodities, the monetary value of coffee beans is surpassed only by oil.

Houstonian Duke Furrh got into the coffee business because of his undeniably robust love of coffee. Spend a few minutes talking beans with him and you’ll see he’s not just a fan of the beverage; he’s something of a coffee ambassador. As a scout for his company, Lola Savannah Coffee Company, Furrh pursues and procures high-quality coffee beans from the most sought-after coffee-producing regions of the world. Furrh frequently surveys and samples coffee crops across the bean belt – the swath of the globe between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn.

If you’ve never heard of Lola Savannah it’s because Furrh and his partner Michael Spencer spend more time focusing on roasting than boasting. You’ll find the two dressed in their company shirts and cargo shorts drinking and/or tasting their coffees most weekdays with their clients or at their downtown roasting facility, where small batches of coffee beans – just 30 pounds at a time – are roasted by hand daily.

The unpretentious pair is soft-spoken, but sentimental, about their world headquarters on the north side of downtown Houston. “It’s a great old brick and mortar building,” says Furrh. The rock-solid, red brick building was built by Jesse Jones as a stationary warehouse in 1925 at the corner of Commerce and Jackson. This especially sturdy structure was designed to support a mountain of paper, so it’s well-suited for stacking the standard 132- to 152-pound bags of coffee beans Lola Savannah imports.

Being centrally located within the city is advantageous for routing their deliveries all over the Houston area and the eastern half of Texas. Why is that so important?

Furrh’s passion is seeking out the best beans from almost every coffee-producing region of the world.

Coffee roasted locally yields the best-quality cup you can get, because freshness and flavor begin to diminish immediately after roasting. Coffee shipped from elsewhere has been bagged for days, weeks or longer. Local coffee is a greener choice as well, since it is only transported a few miles rather than a few time zones.

The company, which specializes in custom small-batch roasting and coffee imports, began in 1995. Furrh got involved with Lola Savannah in 1997 and eventually purchased the company, while Spencer came on board in 2002. Back then, the company’s client base was mostly made up of restaurants, so the determined duo set about building the wholesale side of the business. After selling their coffees to clients such as Bering’s Hardware, major grocery stores became part of the Lola family.

Furrh’s passion is seeking out the best beans from almost every coffee-producing region of the world – no continent or island is beyond his scope. Business partner Michael Spencer focuses on customer service. “I like selling coffee, because people usually know they want to buy it,” Spencer laughs. “It’s not like selling life insurance or investment services,” Furrh adds with a grin.

The two take pride in the products they offer and the service they provide to their clients. And they must be doing something right, because Lola Savannah has experienced steady growth in recent years, picking up new customers almost completely by word of mouth.

Today, H-E-B and Central Market make up Lola Savannah’s biggest client. The Texas grocer and gourmet foods retailer regularly offers about 15 varieties of Lola Savannah coffees. The company also distributes their coffees to select Houston-area Kroger and Fiesta stores and Fresh Plus stores in the Austin area. Numerous varieties, such as Nicaraguan Matagalpa and Tanzanian Peaberry, are available at those select store locations. You may have tried Lola Savannah coffees at Houston restaurants, such as Vic & Anthony’s, Brenner’s Steakhouse on the Bayou, Star Pizza, Irma’s, Out to Lunch, Dharma Cafe, Ziggy’s Healthy Grill and Epicure Bakery.

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Families of Food

With the opening of new concepts and the preservation of old favorites, these families continue to shape downtown’s dynamic culinary scene.

By Trip McMurrey
As the most populous city in the South – not to mention the region’s cultural center – Houston inevitably draws comparisons to America’s megalopolis, New York City. Like Gotham, the Bayou City takes a great deal of pride in its culturally diverse population, strong industry, robust visual and performing arts scenes, and – of course – the restaurants. Oh, the restaurants. A good argument can be made that outside of the Big Apple, Houston’s restaurant scene is second to none. Some might even argue that Manhattan could learn a few things from Houston’s pack of culinary heavyweights.

Much like New York’s – ahem – alternative business community, Houston’s downtown foodie community is ruled by The Five Families. Instead of Gambino, Genovese et al, Houston has Schiller- Del Grande, Cordúa, Naafa, Galvan, and Torres. With the notable exception of a proclivity for using sharp knives, the similarities mercifully end there.

SCHILLER-DEL GRANDE

No restaurant opening in 2008 matched the anticipation, excitement or glitz surrounding the debut of The Grove (1611 Lamar, 713.337.7321), the Schiller-Del Grande Restaurant Group’s rustic American concept that sits – appropriately enough – among a grove of mature live oak trees in the southern part of downtown Houston’s showcase 11.8 acre Discovery Green. 2008 also saw the debut of SDG’s other new restaurant concept dubbed The Lake House – a family friendly burger and hotdog “shack” located on the southern shore of Discovery Green’s Kinder Lake.

All that attention makes sense given not only the high profile nature of the urban green space project, but also the pedigree of the restaurants’ operators. In addition to innovating the fast casual dining concept with the founding of the popular Café Express franchise in 1984, Schiller-Del Grande also created the Rio Ranch Texas Steakhouse concept in 1992 and the Taco Milagro Mexican beach bar concept in 1998. Schiller-Del Grande is – of course – best known for their flagship property, the iconic Café Annie.

For over two decades, the Schillers and Del Grandes have been the first family of Houston dining. In 1980, husband and wife team Lonnie and Candice Schiller – then owners and operators of a marketing business – founded Café Annie in a space on the corner of Westheimer and Augusta now occupied by a Jason’s Deli. That same year, Candice’s sister Mimi returned to Houston from Riverside, California to work at the restaurant and to be closer to her family.

In the summer of 1981, Mimi’s husband Robert Del Grande – who had just finished his doctorate in biochemistry – followed her to Houston and took what he thought was going to be a short-term job working in the Café Annie kitchen. “We thought we’d stay three months,” notes Del Grande. “Mimi had always intended for us to move back to the West Coast. We didn’t think we’d be here more than a summer. It was just meant to be for fun.” Little did he know at the time, but Robert Del Grande was on the verge of culinary stardom. From the Café Annie kitchen, Del Grande found himself at the forefront of what would become the Modern Southwestern Cuisine Movement.

Over the next two and half decades, Schiller-Del Grande – led by partners Candice Schiller, Lonnie Schiller, Mimi Del Grande and Robert Del Grande – built a Houston-based restaurant empire with each partner taking responsibility for part of the business. “For any good partnership to work – be it family or a business enterprise – you have to trust the people you work with and respect the individual skills they bring to the table,” Del Grande says. “We all have different skills and bring something unique to the company.”

Each member of the family has domain over a particular aspect of SDG’s operations. “It’s great to be in an enterprise where I know the food is always going to be spectacular even though I don’t need to know that much about it,” says SDG CEO Lonnie Schiller. “It allows me to focus on real estate, funding and marketing. Candy gets to focus on the designing of the restaurants, and Mimi is in charge of hiring the right people.”

With Restaurant RDG / Bar Annie – the spiritual successor to Café Annie – set to make its much anticipated debut this summer, the Schiller’s and Del Grande’s perch atop Houston’s food pyramid seems secure.
Located in the Hobby Center for the Performing Arts, Artista (800 Bagby, 713.278.4782) is the brainchild of Michael Cordua, head of Cordua Restaurants, tireless fundraiser, and unofficial cultural ambassador to Nicaragua and Central America. From the moment Artista swung open its doors alongside the shiny new downtown arts center in 2002, it was the restaurant that almost stole the show. Artista’s list of accolades is long and includes being named Best New Restaurant by Texas Monthly magazine in 2004 and voted Best Décor / Atmosphere by the Houston Business Journal in 2005.

As the city’s first-ever full service restaurant in a theater, Artista was not without its challenges, and it is Cordua who is credited with its long-term success. After storming onto Houston’s restaurant scene 20 years ago with the opening of Churrascos and then Americas, Cordua has become the toast of the town as a visionary chef / restaurateur with an unlimited imagination for the fanciful, winning the hearts and stomachs of legions of fans—not to mention national critics.

Now owners and operators of no less than six successful restaurant concepts—including the new Americas in The Woodlands—Cordua Restaurants has another edge with the ascension of Cordua’s son, David, who continues the tradition of extravagant adventure in the realm of fine food. David, who trained at the Cordon Bleu in Paris after graduating from Santa Clara University in California, is bringing a healthy dose of second generation energy to the table with serious ambition, extensive training, raw talent, and—oh yes—quite the infectious grin.

“There’s something about the restaurant industry that brings families together,” says the affable David. “Food was a way of bringing my dad and me together in a house full of girls. Lots of boys have football or cars. For us it was food.”

His father adds, “Coming from Nicaragua, the family business is the nature of business period. We don’t look at families working together as something bad. With your family, you know you are not going to miss any phone calls and your back will always be covered.”

True as that may be, when father and son are in the kitchen together, the climate can get a bit heated. “We definitely try and one up each other,” admits David, “like the summer of 2007, which later became known as the Battle of the Ribs.”

All quasi-joking aside, the addition of David as chef and partner adds another delegate to the Cordua Group, which in turn allows them to expand their reach while maintaining
quality control. “I wouldn’t have been able to do Americas in The Woodlands if David had not come on board and learned the business from the inside out. It gives me tremendous satisfaction to have my son working with me side by side,” beams his father.

TORRES

Our dad taught us that in order to be successful, you’ve got to have the willingness to do the work. If you are lazy and happen to be successful, that is what he called lucky,” imparts Phillip Torres, co-owner of the hip new Guadalaja del Centro (1201 San Jacinto, 713.650.0101), located in the Houston Pavilions.

Phillip and his younger brother Fabian should know a thing or two about hard work and dedication in the cutthroat restaurant biz, having virtually grown up in their father’s Mexican restaurant El Gallo, located in Spring Branch. When he opened that enduring local favorite in 1979, Phillip was 13 and his younger brother Fabian was just 7 years old. “I had eight children, had lost my oldest child, and had $4,000 to my name,” recalls their dad, George Torres, “and I had to figure out how to support my family.” When a family friend with a pizza parlor close to his kids’ high school suddenly decided to put the business up for sale, the elder Torres seized the opportunity and never looked back. Without putting very much money into it, he changed the concept to Mexican food, hired a master cook and learned the business on the job.

At an early age, the Torres boys learned that restaurants could be logistically challenging. “There is more work in the restaurant business than in most other industries,” says Fabian, “but we grew up in it, and it could be lots of fun too. Once the doors were locked and everyone was gone, it was all about the ice fights.”

Though older brother Phillip had designs on becoming a veterinarian and attending Texas A&M – as a teenager he even had his own cow to prepare for his would-be career – his father made him an offer he couldn’t refuse just as he was headed off to school: to hand over the reigns of El Gallo. “There really wasn’t a lot of risk since my dad was offering to flat out give me the restaurant,” says Phillip, “so I thought I’d at least try it since it was already kind of ingrained in my blood.”

After a successful run with the original El Gallo and later a second location, Phillip and his younger brother Fabian struck

“Overall it’s good to be in a business with your family,” says Phillip, “especially when everyone is good at a particular area.”
out on their own in a partnership with family friend Jimmy Martinez, opening Guadalajara Hacienda by Town & Country Mall in 1986 (it later relocated to Memorial City). The concept took off, and the brothers soon opened up another Guadalajara Hacienda location in The Woodlands and later Guadalajara Mexican Bar & Grille on the Southwest Freeway.

With their just-opened fourth location at Houston Pavilions, the brothers have tweaked the concept to cater to the downtown clientele with a focus on signature items like salads, ceviche and tableside guacamole, though their approach to the business remains the same: namely great food, drinks and service.

“Overall it’s good to be in a business with your family,” says Phillip, “especially when everyone is good at a particular area.” And just what are the roles of this dynamic duo? “He’s Batman and I’m Robin,” jokes Fabian.

Reflecting on the family’s newest location, he adds, “If I was young and single I would definitely want to live downtown, which is probably why we decided to come down here. And we feel like we’re putting out some of the best food we’ve ever done.”

NAFAA

When Youssef Nafaa arrived in Chicago from his native Morocco in 1988, his plan was to go to engineering school and return home with degree in hand. Though he spoke no English at the time and had no connections in the United States, the ambitious Nafaa felt confident he could accomplish his goals. His plans would be rerouted, however, when his father passed away. The future engineering student abruptly changed courses in order to support his family during an exceedingly difficult time.

With a lifelong interest in food – he had been the family taster and definitely knew his flavors – Nafaa landed a job as a busboy at a Greek family restaurant in Chicago and later managed to get admitted into the Cordon Bleu in Chicago, where he ultimately received an associate degree at the Culinary Arts / Hotel & Restaurant Management School.

In the midst of all that, he also met his future wife in a clas-
The Galvan clan, from left, Louis, Monica, Tony and Irma.

The Galvan clan, from left, Louis, Monica, Tony and Irma.
Her eldest son Louis joined in 1992 followed by daughter Monica and then son Tony in 1994. Youngest son Ray – who’s set to graduate from the University of Texas El Paso in May – started helping out when he was 13 years old. “I never got married after my husband passed away and I was here to raise a family,” she recalls. “Before I died, I wanted to have something set for them, where they could have a family restaurant and they could work together. Of course you always worry about your family.”

Although free of the pomp of many popular dining spots, the walls of Irma’s are adorned with assorted trinkets and treasures collected over decades, not to mention a 2008 James Beard Award. Irma’s regulars include many of downtown Houston’s most prominent movers and shakers. “Ninety percent of our customers are regulars – county judges, circuit court employees, Mayor Bill White among many other politicians … basically anybody who’s anyone.”

The brand expanded in 1999 when son Louis branched off with the opening of Irma’s Southwest Grill (1314 Texas, 713.247.9651) on the corner of Texas and Austin in the Great Southwest Building. “I couldn’t duplicate what my mom’s doing, so I made my place,” says Louis. The concept features a more upscale menu with a greater focus on catering to private functions. In addition to a contract with the Houston Dynamo Major League Soccer team and University of Houston, Irma’s Southwest Grill is a favorite among law firms and oil & gas companies.

“I couldn’t put up with my mom anymore. We think too much alike,” notes Louis regarding the split. “Plus I like to run things differently. Since I broke off on my own, our relationship has flourished. The downside is that we split the business about 50/50. My mom still does bigger lunches than I do.”

Although Irma and Monica remain focused on the original Irma’s Restaurant location, she does occasionally pay Louis a visit. “She doesn’t come in very often,” he says. “But when she does, she makes her presence known.”

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“Ninety percent of our customers are regulars – county judges, circuit court employees, Mayor Bill White among many other politicians … basically anybody who’s anyone.”
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If you want something more imaginative than your everyday happy hour chips and dip, head to the Alden Hotel’s **a+ bar & grille** for $2 shrimp tacos and crispy calamari, both sure to make you a seafood lover. **MCCORMICK & SCHMICK’S** has fried shrimp, an ahi tuna roll or ceviche and none of it’s over $4.95. With 59 beers, specials on the three wisemen, martinis and perfect brick oven pizzas, **ANGELO’S** is a primo happy hour destination – seven days a week. For great food with a stunning view, you want **THE TREEHOUSE** in Discovery Green. Beef sliders, Kona kampachi and Kennebec potato chips all make an appearance on an extensive menu, as do several signature cocktails.

**Best Tableside Service**
**QUATTRO**
Watch them layer biscotti, fresh oranges and espresso granita to create Houston’s finest tiramisu in front of your eyes at Quattro in the Four Seasons. It’s a fantastically fresh twist on a classic Italian dessert.

**Best Food You Loved As A Kid**
**17 RESTAURANT**
Mac ‘n cheese grows up at the Alden’s swanky 17. The childhood favorite is as creamy and cheesy as you remember, but an infusion of truffle oil takes this comfort food to a whole new level.

**Best Chance You’ll Need A Doggy Bag**
**SHULA’S STEAK HOUSE**
If you can actually finish the 48-ounce porterhouse, you’ll be a member of The 48-Ounce Club, with bragging rights and your name listed on their web site.

**Best Way To Skip Church Without Feeling Guilty**
**HOUSE OF BLUES**
METRORail ushered Houston into the mass transit age, and the Main Street corridor’s gentrification followed quickly after. Watch the silver bullet pass by at MIA BELLA, where you also can have tasty risotto and wine, or at the CORNER BAKERY AND CAFÉ, where you can indulge in breakfast and lunch items like the massive muffins, flavorful coffee and gourmet sandwiches. At SHAY MCELROY’S you can nosh on pub fare and over at ANGELO’S, you can watch the train while drinking a great brew (more than 50 to choose) served from the coldest tap in the city.
Theater District restaurants are the perfect overture to a night of culture. Before a big Broadway show at the Hobby Center, check out ARTISTA’S angel wings or grilled swordfish. Next door to the Alley Theatre, BIRRAPORETTI’S serves up home-style Italian; the chicken picatta is particularly nice with a Pinot Grigio. If the Wortham Theater Center is your destination, don’t miss the three-course, fixed price pre-theater menu at the Alden Hotel’s 17, the veal scaloppini from MINGALONE’S CURTAIN CALL menu or the selections at BISTRO LANCASTER, all within walking distance. Fans rave about the seafood ravioli at PERBACCO in the Pennzoil Building and at TABLE 7 BISTRO you can grab a pre-theater drink and kicked-up bar cuisine.

Best Schizophrenic Kitchen
CIELO MEXICAN BISTRO & COLLIN’S CHOP HOUSE
Part Mexican bistro, part old-school chop house, Cielo and Collin’s give a whole new meaning to multiple personality. Two separate restaurants, they share some facilities, so start early with the chimichurri steak at Cielo then stop by for a whiskey-laden happy hour at Collins – and stick around for their prime rib.

Best Throw-Back To The ’80s
FOUNDATION ROOM
Channel your inner Working Girl or Gordon Gecko with dollar martinis during lunch at House of Blues’ hip and happening Foundation Room. Live it up, because unless you’re a member, lunch is the only time you can get a reservation. Order a dirty one and chase it with crab cakes.

Critic’s Choice
VOICE
Esquire named Voice the Best New Restaurant of 2008 and Travel + Leisure calls it one of the 50 best new restaurants in the country. It’s easy to see why. Chef Michael Kramer combines local ingredients for a truly Texas taste, with nods to continental cuisine.

Don’t Worry, Be “Hoppy”
FLYING SAUCER DRAUGHT EMPORIUM
Houston’s home base for hops. Whether you fancy a true English ale, a Belgian brew or anything in between, head here for the city’s most extensive beer list. Insider hint: beer flights = good. Chase it with some good ole fashioned pub food.

Your “Eyes Are Bigger Than Your Stomach” Moment
STRIP HOUSE
You made it through dinner at the Strip House, famous for its flavorful steaks and huge portions, and now you’re ready for dessert. Make sure you’ve left some room for their Decadent Twenty Four Layer Chocolate Cake. Twelve layers of cake, 11 layers of semisweet ganache and Tobago chocolate cannot be denied.
Best Place For Sealing The Deal
VIC AND ANTHONY’S STEAKHOUSE
Power brokers have Vic and Anthony’s set on speed dial and you’ll know why after your first visit. Clubby, old-school and known for their steaks, it’s Houston’s business address. Come in for lunch or dinner and be ready to network and break out the expense account.

Freshest Fish
MCCORMICK & SCHMICK’S
Newly opened in Houston Pavilions, McCormick & Schmick’s serves up seafood so fresh you’ll be convinced the chef went out and caught it just for you. Lobster, shrimp, halibut, salmon, an ever-changing array of oysters on the half shell, swordfish, crab…you get the idea. It’s all served to perfection.

carrots, cucumbers, jalapeno peppers and cilantro. At $2.75, it won’t break the bank and might just be your new lunch favorite.

Best Way To Go Green
GUADALAJARA DEL CENTRO
Order the guacamole at Guadalajara, located in the new Houston Pavilions, and feel like you’re on vacation. It’s made to order every time with a perfect blend of avocado, onion, tomato, cilantro and fresh lime, and paired with crispy tortilla chips.

Best Late Night Slice
FRANK’S PIZZA
When you’re done with downtown’s bars, stop in for a slice of downtown’s best pie. Order the supreme for a killer combo of meats and veggies and eat it looking at the larger-than-life movie posters on the wall. Or grab a great big slice of classic cheese or pepperoni and nosh on the way to your next nightspot.

don’t see spirits, you’ll love the Italian comfort food – meatballs, ravioli, chicken parmigiana and, naturally, spaghetti.

Best Place To Wear A Bib And Not Get Laughed At
RAGIN’ CAJUN
Laissez les bon temps roulez at Ragin’ Cajun, in the heart of downtown’s tunnel system. Follow the crowd looking for quick Cajun cuisine, including gumbo, crawfish or shrimp po’ boys and fried oysters.

Best Post-Barhopping Spot
EL REY TAQUERIA
Open till 3 a.m. on Fridays and Saturdays, funky El Rey on Main serves up killer coffee and muy bien Cuban and Mexican for not a lot of dinero. Refuel from your weekend partying with a hot Acapulco sandwich (rotisserie chicken, onion sauce, pinto beans, cheddar cheese on toast) or wake up with an espresso drink.

Best Balcony
CABO’S MIX MEX
Cabo’s balcony is the perfect spot for margaritas and people watching during happy hour or for chomping down fish tacos at lunch. The perch wraps around the side of the building, giving great Market Square views and spot-on food at the same time. What more could you want?

Best Place To Take The Kids
DOWNTOWN AQUARIUM
Kids will dig watching the sharks and other fish, checking out the tigers, the Ferris wheel and the train at the Downtown Aquarium. The kids’ menu features all their favorites like popcorn shrimp, mini cheeseburgers and chicken tenders. Bonus: the menu’s an activity book for even more interactive fun.

Best Place To Rub Elbows With Local Celebrities
THE GROVE
Everybody comes to The Grove, Houston’s hottest downtown spot for haute cuisine. Keep an eye out for local TV stars, celebrity athletes and Houston’s social set, because they all wind up here, sipping the signature Summer in Bombay, and munching on deviled yard eggs, Gulf Coast oyster bruschetta, the charcoal grilled rib eye or the chef’s family-style tasting of house specialties.
Some places have a personality based on their geography and that’s true of these downtown faves. **THE LAST CONCERT CAFE** dishes up eclectic, local music and tasty Tex Mex staples from behind a red door. **IRMA’S** doesn’t have a menu – or serve dinner – but it’s a downtown institution where you’ll get great Mexican food and rub elbows with the political crowd. Anchoring Market Square, **TREEBEARDS** is a must-visit for red beans and rice, gumbo, daily specials and other Louisiana-inspired comfort foods. Don’t forget to wash it down with one of their “you-will-want-more-than-one” butter bars.
Best Cheap Eats

THE LAKE HOUSE

Frugal foodies and fun-lovers know THE LAKE HOUSE at Discovery Green is great for burgers, salads and soups under $10. At CHINA GARDEN, next to Toyota Center, you’ll get cheap Chinese that tastes like a million bucks. And you’ll love the taste – and the price – on the chicken, pork or spinach dumplings at DOOZO in The Shops at Houston Center. With those options, there’s no need to break the bank for a good meal.
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Sunday is the perfect day to enjoy Discovery Green and the Downtown Green Market by Central City Co-Op. Pick up your fresh produce for the week or grab a gelato or coffee and then kick back on the lawn for an outdoor concert.

For the schedule of happenings, visit discoverygreen.com
THEATER

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF

Through Jun 7 Fiddler on the Roof has been lauded by critics again and again and won the hearts of people all around the world. Filled with a roving, heartwarming score, which includes Tradition, Matchmaker, Matchmaker and If I Were a Rich Man, Fiddler on the Roof is a timeless classic. Tickets $23–$61. Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. 713.629.3700. broadwayacrossamerica.com

DEFENDING THE CAVEMAN

Jun 2-14 Broadway’s smash comedy about the ways men and women relate has both sexes roaring with laughter and recognition. With hysterical observations of contemporary feminism, masculine sensitivity and the erogenous zones, Defending the Caveman mines the common themes in relationships, going straight to the funny bone while warming the heart. Tickets $49.50. Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. 713.315.2525. thehobbycenter.org

THE FARNSWORTH INVENTION

Jun 5-28 In 1929, two ambitious visionaries race against each other to invent a device called “television.” Separated by 2,000 miles, each knows that if he stops working, even for a moment, the other will gain the edge. Who will unlock the key to the greatest innovation of the 20th century: the ruthless media mogul, or the self-taught Idaho farm boy? Recommended for mature audiences. Tickets $21–$55. Alley Theatre, 615 Texas. 713.220.5700. alleytheatre.org

NIGHT COURT 2009: LEGAL FAIRY TALES

Jun 10-13 The annual all-lawyer musical comedy that benefits charity is back with a stage show that parodies current events, pop culture, politics and nautical entertainment, as well as the legal profession. Tickets $15–$29. Wortham Center, 501 Texas. 713.759.1133. hba.org

CABARET

Jun 16-28 The decadent world of 1930s Berlin comes along the way). Tickets $23–$57. Alley Theatre, 615 Texas. 713.220.5700. alleytheatre.org

PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

Jul 8–Aug 2 With some of the most lavish sets, costumes and special effects ever to have been created for the stage, Andrew Lloyd Webber’s The Phantom of the Opera traces the tragic love story of a beautiful opera singer and a young composer shamed by his physical appearance into a shadowy existence beneath the majestic Paris Opera House. Tickets $25–$75. Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. 713.629.3700. broadwayacrossamerica.com

OPRAH WINFREY PRESENTS THE COLOR PURPLE

Aug 18-23 A soul-stirring musical based on the classic Pulitzer Prize-winning novel by Alice Walker and the Oscar-nominated film by Steven Spielberg. It is the unforgettable and inspiring story of a woman named Celie, who triumphs over tremen- dous odds to find joy in life, and her true inner beauty. Tickets start at $32. Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. 713.558.8887. tuts.com

PERFORMING ARTS

OF AN ERA

Through Jun 7 Three talented choreographers. Three exquisite works. Christoper Wheeldon’s Carousel is pure romance, a whirling tribute to the Richard Rodgers iconic musical. Spanish choreographer Nacho Durato’s first work, Jardi Tancat, is still considered one of his finest. Concluding the program is Stanton Welch’s Nosotros, a brilliant display of talent in a magical, starlit setting. Tickets $17–$150. Wortham Center, 501 Texas. 713.227.2777. houstonballet.org

BRYAN ADAMS

Jun 1 The show will provide a rare opportunity for fans to see Adams as they’ve not seen him before: solo–acoustic and intimate. Tickets $60–$126. Wortham Center, 501 Texas. 713.629.3700. ticketmaster.com

THE POWER OF MOVEMENT

Jun 5 Eleven of Houston’s best contemporary dance companies will be showcased in this stellar one-night-only event. From Travesty Dance Group to Dominic Walsh Dance Theater to Houston Ballet, the program will feature an astonishing variety of dance companies and styles. Tickets $17–$32. Wortham Center, 501 Texas. 713.227.2777. houstonballet.org

SWAN LAKE

Jun 11-21 With the goal of making classical ballet relevant for a new generation of audiences, artistic director Stanton Welch has put

Soaring performance

Cirque du Soleil’s Saltimbanco takes spectators on an acrobatic journey into the heart of the city. The dazzling performance, which will wow audiences from Wednesday, July 22 through Sunday, July 26, takes the urban experience in all its forms and brings it to life – from people in their day-to-day existence to the hustle and bustle of the street and the soaring skyscrapers that define a city’s silhouette. The show’s baroque ambience will draw you into a fanciful, dreamlike world, an imaginary place where diversity is a cause for hope. Since its premier in 1992, more than 9 million people have been enchanted by Saltimbanco and now you can see its moving message in a reconfiguration designed especially for larger venues such as Toyota Center.

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Live long and prosper

Some film scores are simply unmistakable and the sounds of cinema’s greatest science fiction epics are no different. The Houston Symphony and associate conductor Robert Franz explore the music of some cultural favorites with the Music of Star Trek & More Sci Fi. They’re all there – 2001: A Space Odyssey, Battlestar Galactica and of course, Star Trek. You’ll not only get the themes from the original series and Star Trek: Voyager, you’ll also get the music of the newest addition to the saga – this year’s film, Star Trek. Trekkies take note: come dressed as your favorite character and participate in the Symphony’s costume contest. Tickets for the July 9 event at Jones Hall start at $25 and can be purchased online.

GAMER MUSICON 09 WITH VIDEO GAMES LIVE™ & BLIZZARD LIVE!

Jul 18 Create celebration of the video game music with an interactive festival and high-energy concerts. In the first concert, immerse yourself in the sights and sounds of Blizzard Entertainment® games World of Warcraft®, Diablo®, and StarCraft®. A Game Crazy festival open throughout the day will offer a costume contest, playable demos and interactive events with game composers and Blizzard personnel. Play in the Guitar Hero® contest for a chance to appear on stage during the day’s final concert, Tommy Tallarico’s Video Games Live™, featuring the music and footage of games like Halo®, BioshockTM and Gears of War. Tickets start at $50. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. 713.224.7575. houstonsymphony.org

THE BLUE PLANET LIVE!

Jul 24 An epic adventure to explore the vivid depiction of the world’s oceans seen in the celebrated BBC/Discovery television series The Blue Planet. In this concert, Assistant Conductor/ American Conducting Fellow Brett Mitchell will lead the Houston Symphony in a live performance of Fenton’s evocative music while a specially edited theatrical presentation of the series’ most remarkable sequences plays on a giant screen above the Jones Hall stage. Due to the graphic nature of some film sequences, this concert is recommended for children 12 years old and up. Tickets start at $35. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. 713.224.7575. houstonsymphony.org

MUSIC OF STAR TREK & MORE SCI-FI

Jul 9 The space operas of film and television have inspired composers to write music as thrilling as the adventures these blockbusters depict. Explore the music of sci-fi favorites including 2001: A Space Odyssey, Battlestar Galactica and the Star Trek franchise including music from the newest addition to the saga – this year’s film, Star Trek. Come dressed as your favorite character to participate in the Symphony’s costume contest. Tickets start at $25. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. 713.224.7575. houstonsymphony.org

his 21st century signature on this 19th century love story. Set to the hauntingly beautiful Tchaikovsky score, Swan Lake tells the classic tale of Odette – a beautiful maiden transformed into a swan by an evil knight – and the prince who swears his enduring love for her. Tickets $17-$150. Wortham Center, 501 Texas. 713.224.7575. houstonsymphony.org

¡LA PERLA!

Jun 13 ¡La Perla! will be a HOT retrospective of the sounds and flavors of Latin America and Spain. The program will include zarzuelas of Spanish opera, tangos of Argentina, and salsas of Brazil and Cuba and will also feature the great hits of famous contemporary vocal artists. Tickets $22-$55. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. 512.389.0315. frontgeticketstickets.com

PANDIT JASRAJ IN DHYANAM

Jun 20 The ultimate in spiritual musical experience! Tickets $22-$77. Wortham Center, 501 Texas. 281.648.0422. laahouston.com

AFA CONSERVATORY ORCHESTRA & AFA FACULTY CONCERT

Jul 7 Join AFA’s Conservatory Orchestra and the outstanding AFA Faculty in a joint performance. Free. Wortham Center, 501 Texas. 713.322.9699. afatexas.net

MUSIC OF STAR TREK & MORE SCI-FI

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EXHIBITS & VISUAL ARTS

NEW ART IN AUSTIN: 20 TO WATCH


RETAILS: ART FOR THE MASSES

Through Jul 12 The works on exhibit provide an insight into the art of the retablo, but more importantly these paintings are windows into understanding traditions associated with sacred spaces, ritual practices, values, and regional customs found throughout the Americas. Free. Tue–Sat 10–4 and Sun 1–4. The Heritage Society Museum, 1100 Bagby. 713.655.1912. heritagesociety.org

ARTDIA: HOUSTON @ DIVERSEWORKS


MILES AND MILES OF TEXAS: THE LONE STAR STATE THROUGH THE EYES OF BUCK SCHIWETZ

Jul 18-Sep 27 This exhibition will be presented in collaboration with CASETA (Center for the Advancement for Early Texas Art) and feature artworks by Buck Schiwetz, E. M. (Buck) Schiwetz was born in Cuero, Texas in 1898. He was a painter whose work recorded the state of Texas from the country to the city. Free. Tue–Sat 10–4 and Sun 1–4. The Heritage Society Museum, 1100 Bagby. 713.655.1912. heritagesociety.org

SPEAKER SERIES & BOOK CLUBS

AN EVENING WITH NANCY PELOSI

Jun 12 Nancy Pelosi is the first female Speaker of the House and author of Knock Your Power: A Message To America’s Daughters, a copy of which will be given to
BACKSTAGE PEEK

If you’ve ever gone to a performance and wondered what goes on behind the scenes than the Theater District Open House is most definitely for you. Who makes the costumes? Who builds those amazing sets? And just what is a bassoon and what does it look like up close? All these mysteries and more get answered when the city’s major performing arts organizations open their doors on Sunday, August 30 from noon to 4. You also get Q&A sessions with performers and sneak previews of the 2009–2010 Theater District season. Venues at this free family event include: the Alley Theatre, Hobby Center for the Performing Arts, Wortham Theatre Center and Jones Hall. As an added bonus, the participating organizations always have special packages and deals.


houstontheaterrdistric.org

HILL/FINGER LECTURE SERIES, PATRONS & PROTECTORS:
THE HERITAGE OF THE MEXICAN RETABLO

Every 2nd Tue of the month. Noon-1 (bring your lunch). Central Library, 500 McKinney. 832.393.1313.

MYSTERY BOOK CLUB
Every 3rd Tue of the month If you like to read and discuss literary fiction written in the last 50 years or so, please join the club, held every second Tuesday of the month. Noon-1 (bring your lunch). Central Library, 500 McKinney. 832.393.1313.

FILM
FIRST THURSDAYS AT DEAN’S

Every 1st Thu of the month. Noon-1 (bring your lunch). Central Library, 500 McKinney. 832.393.1313.

VERIZON WIRELESS THEATER

Tickets start at $7. Minute Maid Park, 501 Crawford. 713.230.1600. livenation.com

HOUSTON ASTROS

SPORTS

HOUSTON DYNAMO

HOB’S concert calendar is continuously being updated. Check online for more info and to purchase tickets. House of Blues, Houston Pavilions, 1204 Caroline. 888.402.5837. hob.com

ANGELIKA FILM CENTER

Stylish cinema playing an eclectic mix of art films and commercial movies from major studios. $9 adults, $7 matinee, $6.25 kids, $6.5 seniors (note: if you park in the Theater District garage, they will deduct from your ticket price but you must bring parking ticket with you). Bayou Place, 510 Texas. 713.225.1479. angelikafilmcenter.com

TOYOTA CENTER

Tickets $20-$52. University of Houston. 713.230.1600. livenation.com

SPORTS

HOUSTON DYNAMO

Every 2nd Tue of the month. Noon-1 (bring your lunch). Central Library, 500 McKinney. 832.393.1313.
**FESTIVALS & SPECIAL EVENTS**

**HOUSTON YOUTH DANCE INSIDE OUT**

Jun 3 Filled with creative and fun works, this event brings Houston’s top youth companies to the stage. If your children are interested in dance, this is a must see! Free. Wed noon. Discovery Green, 1500 McKinney. 713.400.7336. discoverygreen.com

**HOUSTON DANCE INSIDE OUT**

Jun 3 Official opening performance of Dance USA 2009 Conference. Houston dance companies take the stage and light up Discovery Green with energy, beauty and powerful entertainment from the inside out. This unique performance will offer every genre of dance, making it an exciting not-to-miss event Free. Wed 7. Discovery Green, 1500 McKinney. 713.400.7336. discoverygreen.com

**DUAL LANGUAGE ALADDIN**

Jun 12 TUTS presents the worldwide premiere of Dual Language Aladdin, the beloved story of Aladdin in Spanish and English. Free. Fri 11- noon. Discovery Green, 1500 McKinney. 713.400.7336. discoverygreen.com

**HPD MOONLIGHT CLASSIC BIKE RIDE**

Jun 12 This two–hour recreational ride is for cyclists of all ages and abilities, on a traffic–free course stretching 5 to 35 miles on Memorial Drive. $25 pre-registration and $15 for kids under 12; $35 day of the event. $15 for HPD and immediate family. Fri 9, Downtown Aquarium, 410 Bagby. 713.651.3122. houstonpolicefoundation.com

**DOCKDOGS**

Jun 26-28 The Big Air Dogs competition is a dynamic canine sport measuring leaps and bounds. Regularly televised on the Outdoor Channel, DockDogs competition consists of dogs jumping into water from a designated dock with the largest or highest leap earning that canine a victory. Dogs and owners travel to Houston to compete, and the competition will be open to local dogs, too. Free. Please check online for competition times. Discovery Green, 1500 McKinney. 713.400.7336. discoverygreen.com

**RECREATION & HEALTHY LIVING**

**PILATES IN THE PARK WITH TUTS**

Tuesdays in Jun Classic flexibility and strength training, only better. Instructor Victoria Arzipe teaches at TUTS Humphreys School for Theatrical Arts. Free, Tues 6–7. Discovery Green, 1500 McKinney. 713.400.7336. discoverygreen.com

**ZUMBA!**

Wednesdays in Jun It’s not a workout, it’s a party! Cumbia, merengue, salsa, rumba, flamenco and calypso in one routine. Instructor Oscar Sajche. Free. Wed 6–7pm. Discovery Green, 1500 McKinney. 713.400.7336. discoverygreen.com

**TAI CHI IN THE PARK**

Thursdays in Jun Reduce stress, increase focus and gain strength through Tai Chi, meditation through movement. Instructor Frank Murry. Free. Thu noon-1. Discovery Green, 1500 McKinney. 713.400.7336. discoverygreen.com

**YOGA IN THE PARK WITH TUTS**

Saturdays in Jun Inspired movement under the trees, in the park. Free. Sat 9:30-10:30. Discovery Green, 1500 McKinney. 713.400.7336. discoverygreen.com

**NIA**

Sundays in Jun Music, dance and movement in the great outdoors led by Rowan Twosisters. Free. Sun 1–2. Discovery Green, 1500 McKinney. 713.400.7336. discoverygreen.com

**ONGOING SERIES**

**BIKE REPAIR WORKSHOP**

Saturdays in Jun Free bicycle repair lessons by Nicholas Auger. Free. Sat 10-2. Discovery Green, 1500 McKinney. 713.400.7336. discoverygreen.com

**YOUNG WRITERS WORKSHOP IN THE PARK**

Saturdays in Jun Houston’s only open, free writing workshop for kids presented by Writers in the Schools in conjunction with HPL Express. Free. Sat 10–30-11:30. Discovery Green, 1500 McKinney. 713.400.7336. discoverygreen.com

**WELLS FARGO’S CHILDREN’S DISCOVERY SERIES**

Saturdays in Jun Weekly, family–oriented performances

Jun 6 D-Young Artists Ensemble presents African Rhythms and Spirituals in conjunction with Young Audiences of Houston

Jun 13 Jazwad presents Roots of American Music in conjunction with Young Audiences of Houston

Jun 20 Soul People presents Taking it to the Streets in

**RUNNING WITH THE BIG DOGS**

Dog lovers mark your calendars for the event of the summer when DockDogs comes to Discovery Green again. This nationally televised event showcases the athletic derring-do of all kinds of canines as they run from a 20-foot dock and leap into a 40-foot pool of water. Each jump is measured and the canine athletes compete in Extreme Vertical, Speed Retrieve and Big Air events. DockDogs made its Houston debut last June, attracting nearly 150 dogs throughout the weekend. This year’s event, scheduled for Friday, June 26 through Sunday, June 28, is certain to bring even bigger crowds downtown. While labs typically excel at the competition, any breed can bring Houston’s top youth companies to the stage. If your children are interested in dance, this is a must see! Free. Wed noon. Discovery Green, 1500 McKinney. 713.400.7336. discoverygreen.com, Dockdogs.com

**KBR KID’S DAY ON BUFFALO BAYOU**

Jun 6 Hands on activities with more than 20 Houston non-profits. Activities include bayou boat rides, wetland hikes, skateboarding demos, bayou scavenger hunts, kayaking demos with REI, bat games with Texas Parks & Wildlife, fishing lessons, soccer games with the Houston Dynamo, basketball activities with the Houston Rockets, wildflower plantings in the bayou prairies, face painting, balloon twisting and jugglers. Free. 10–2. Sabine Promenade, Sabine St. @ Buffalo Bayou. 713.752.0314. buffalobayou.org

**HOUSTON INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL**

Jul 31-Aug 2 Witness some of the most diverse and inspirational jazz entertainment from around the world. All proceeds go towards funding Jazz Education Inc.’s educational programs. Fri-Sun. Discovery Green, 1500 McKinney. 713.400.7336. jazzeducation.org

**WELLS FARGO’S CHILDREN’S DISCOVERY SERIES**

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Jun 27 Pollinator Festival. Presented by the KinderMorgan Corporate Land for Learning Wildlife Habitat team. Free. Sat noon. Discovery Green, 1500 McKinney. 713.400.7336. discoverygreen.com

HOUSTON ARTS ALLIANCE SHOWCASE
Jun 20 HAA Presents Dance Houston, an exciting citywide showcase of the best of Houston contemporary dance groups with. Free. Sat 3–5. Discovery Green, 1500 McKinney. 713.400.7336. discoverygreen.com

CAPITAL ONE BANK’S THURSDAYS ROCK: CONCERTS ON THE GREEN
Jun 4 Del Castillo – Dynamite Latin Grooves from Austin’s Del Castillo
Jun 11 Susan Cowiss – Grammy-winning 60s icon now New Orleans star attraction performs the Beatles Revolver
Jun 18 Paula Nelson Band and Thunderado – Willie’s daughter and John Fogarty’s guitar singer rock Houston
Jun 25 Moses Guest – Graham Guest fronts; a rocking great time
Free. Thu 6:30. Discovery Green, 1500 McKinney. 713.400.7336. discoverygreen.com

FOUR SEASONS’ SUNDAYS IN THE PARK
Afternoon concerts and park amenities make for an idyllic Sunday in the park.
Jun 7 Houston Association of Acoustic Musicians – singer songwriter showcase
Jun 14 The Trade Jazz Band – cool jazz for a hot Sunday
Jun 21 The Gypsies – gypsy violins and more
Jun 28 Texas Johnny Brown – legendary blues man
Free. Sun 3–5. Discovery Green, 1500 McKinney. 713.400.7336. discoverygreen.com

GREENWORKSDOWNTOWN
BIOLOGIE’S RECYCLING SATURDAYS
Saturdays The City of Houston partners with Discovery Green to present a downtown recycling drop-off location. Bring your paper, glass, plastic and cans. Sat 10–2. Discovery Green, 1500 McKinney. 713.400.7336. discoverygreen.com

CENTRAL CITY CO-OP DOWNTOWN GREEN MARKET AT DISCOVERY GREEN
Sundays through Jun A co-op and farmer’s market offering the freshest organic produce and products made from local, organic ingredients. Noon–4. Discovery Green, 1500 McKinney. 713.400.7336. discoverygreen.com

EXPOS
HIGH CALIBER GUN & KNIFE SHOW

HOUSTON WEDDING SHOWCASE
Aug 29 Meet directly with numerous wedding professionals – all in one location. George R. Brown Convention Center, 1001 Avenida de las Americas, 281.216.4441. houstonweddingshowcase.com

TOURS
SECOND SATURDAY BUFFALO BAYOU BOAT RIDES
Jun 13, Jul 11 & Aug 8 These 30-minute pontoon boat rides are a great way to spend the afternoon with your family and friends. First come, first serve, no reservations, 20 person max per trip. Tickets $7/$5 for kids 4–12. 10–2. Sabine Promenade along Buffalo Bayou. 713.752.0314. buffalobayou.org

BAT TOURS BY PONTOON BOAT
Jun 12 & 26, Jul 10 & 24, Aug 8 & 22 You’ll enjoy an amazing view of the bats’ dusk emergence and learn more about these magnificent flying mammals that share the city with us. Cancellations must take place 48 hours prior to the boat tour. Reservations required. Tickets $35/$20 for kids 4–12. Fri dusk (time varies depending on time of month). Allen’s Landing, Commerce @ Main. 713.752.0314. buffalobayou.org

KAYAK TOURS
Jun 14 Celebrate Houston in a whole new way and join the Buffalo Bayou Partnership for a kayak adventure through Houston’s stunning urban wilderness. Reservations and payment for tours must be made in advance. Cancellations must take place 48 hours prior to the tour. Tickets $60. Sat 9–noon. Start: Shepherd Street. End: Allen’s Landing. 713.752.0314. buffalobayou.org

DISCOVER HOUSTON TOURS
Ghost tours, tunnel walk and rail tours, architecture tours and more are available. Tour guide Sandra Lord is the resident expert and has been conducting downtown and Houston tours since 1988. Ticket prices vary. 713.222.9255. discoverhouston.com

EXPERIENCE HOUSTON WALKING TOURS
Downtown tours include the downtown tunnel system, historic places and panoramic views from the city’s best observation spots. Ticket prices vary. Visitors Center @ City Hall, 901 Bagby, 713.465.7415. visithoustontx.com

HERITAGE SOCIETY HISTORIC HOMES TOUR
Nestled among 19 acres in the heart of downtown Houston, the Heritage Society boasts eight historic structures dating from 1823 to 1905. Each historic structure is authentically restored to reflect its original magnificence. $6 adults, $4 seniors and free for kids under 18. Tue–Sat 10, 11:30, 1, 2:30 and Sun 1, 2:30. 1100 Bagby, 713.655.3912. heritagesociety.org

MINUTE MAID PARK TOUR
Get a behind-the-scenes look at Minute Maid Park including the historic Union Station, broadcasting booth or press boxes, Astros’ or visitors’ dugout, luxury suites and much more. $9 adults, $7 seniors and $5 for kids 3–14. Mon–Sat 10, noon, 2. Minute Maid Park, 501 Crawford. 713.259.8687. astros.com

TOYOTA CENTER’S BACKSTAGE TOUR
The one-hour backstage tour will take you behind the scenes of Houston’s premier destination for sports and entertainment. $7 adults, $5 for kids 12 and under and seniors. Toyota Center, 1510 Polk. 713.758.7715. houstontoyotacenter.com

FREE SELF-GUIDED AUDIO WALKING TOURS
Put on your headphones, hit play and let local insiders, captivating voices and an original soundtrack envelop you in stories of Houston’s past and present. No need to worry about which way to go or what to look for, we’ll point out everything along the way. Three tours are available: The Ultimate Downtown Tour, Museum District Walk & Roll and A Walk in the Park: Discovery Green Walking Tour. Tours are free and available to download to your iPod or MP3 player at houstondowntown.com or as a podcast on iTunes. Be sure to also download the accompanying map for reference.

Calling all kids
What could be better than a summer day filled with family fun, music, food, performances and boat rides down Buffalo Bayou? The third annual KBR Kids Day on Buffalo Bayou has it all and then some on Saturday, June 6 from 10–2 along the Sabine–Bagby Promenade. Activities at this free event include wetland hikes, skateboarding demos, bayou scavenger hunts, kayaking demos, fishing lessons and soccer and basketball with the Houston Dynamo and Houston Rockets.

Buffalo Bayou Partnership buffalobayou.org
Downtown’s favorite pizza place is now a great spot to hear the blues.

Every Sunday night from 6-8:30 you can grab a slice (or try their burgers, lasagna or chicken wings) and settle in for a cool night of live Texas music at Frank’s Pizza, 417 Travis. frankspizza.com

Angelo’s Italian Draffthouse With a menu inspired by traditional Southern Italian cuisine, the specialty of the house is their hand-tossed pizzas baked in the brick oven located behind the 50-foot bar. From the pasta to the sauce to the bread, everything is made fresh to order. With over 50 beers on tap this bistro-meets-tavern concept will surely become a local favorite. angelohouston.com. 711 Main, 713.225.3500. L, D & L Daily. $$

★ Artista American Artista offers inspirational contemporary American cuisine and theatrical ambience with high ceilings, glass walls and sweeping views of the Houston downtown skyline. cordua.com. Hobby Center, 800 Bagby, 713.278.4782. L, Mon-Fri; D, Mon-Sat (Open for L & D on Sunday only if a theater performance is scheduled). $$

Atrium Lobby Lounge Contemporary Located inside the DoubleTree Hotel overlooking Allen Center courtyard. Relax after a busy day and enjoy your favorite beverage or a bite to eat while you catch up on the day’s news on the wide screen TV. DoubleTree Hotel, 400 Dallas, 713.759.0200. L, D & L Daily. $$

★ Azuma Sushi & Robata Bar Japanese/Sushi Voted “Best sushi in Houston” by Citysearch.com, this new-age Japanese restaurant is anything but typical. The ambiance is terrific, the sushi is innovative and fresh and the outside seating area provides great people watching. azumajapanese.com. 909 Texas, 713.223.0909. L Mon-Fri; D Mon-Sun; LN Fri & Sat. $$

Ballpark Café American Enjoy the all-American cuisine and a nostalgic atmosphere for breakfast, lunch or dinner. Just across the street from Minute Maid Park, Ballpark Café is a great place to have a pre/post-game meal. innatetheballpark.com. Inn at the Ballpark, 1520 Texas Avenue, 713.228.1520. B & L Daily. $

★ Banzai Sushi Japanese/Sushi Count on Banzai Sushi at Bayou Place for the freshest sushi, sashimi and specialty rolls. If sushi isn’t your thing, try their vegetable tempura, Chilean sea bass, Korean ribs or chicken teriyaki. Lunch combos start at just $8 and you can receive 10 percent off your bill with a theater ticket for that night. Bayou Place, 550 Texas, 713.225.1167. L & D Daily; LN Fri & Sat. $$

Bells & Whistlies Café Homestyle This homestyle spot offers a menu of American favorites made fresh daily. 1501 Texas Avenue, 713.224.1501. Mon-Fri. Extended and weekend hours on game days and during large downtown events (call ahead). $

Benihana of Tokyo Japanese While some restaur-ants allow their guests to view the kitchen, this Japanese grill brings the kitchen to you. Benihana chefs set up shop right in front of your table. The meal is made from scratch, and you can witness the entire session. The show is amazing and the food is excellent. benihana.com. 1318 Louisiana, 713.659.8231. L & D Daily. $$$

Birraporetti’s Italian This Italian restaurant/Irish bar is a Theater District staple. Their delicious pizzas continue to hit the spot, while items such as the chicken picatta and La Dolce Vita have become standouts. Enjoy a signature dessert to finish the meal. birraporettis.com. 500 Louisiana, 713.224.9494. L, D & LN Daily. $$

★ Bistro Lancaster New American Located in the historic Lancaster Hotel, this cozy getaway is a great place to dine before catching a show in the Theater District. Their new seasonal menu continues Bistro Lancaster’s commitment to local, fresh ingredients of the highest quality. You’ll find hearty soups, zesty steaks and savory seafood. thelancaster.com. Lancaster Hotel, 701 Texas Ave, 713.228.9502. B, L & D Daily. $$$$

Bon Jour Café Deli Offering soups, sandwiches and salads. 945 Capitol , 713.237.0419. B & L Mon-Fri.  §

Bouray’s Burrito Bar Fast Food A burrito bar with tons of ingredients and sides that allow you to create the burrito of your dreams. bourays.com. 609 Clay, 713.652.5999. L Mon-Fri. $$

Brazos Restaurant American Upscale seafood and casual American fare come together in a Texas-chic atmosphere. Newly refurbished, black booths and white tablecloths oﬀer elegance and décor not typically found in hotel restaurants. Crowne Plaza Hotel, 1700 Smith, 713.495.7854. B, L & D Daily. $$$

Brown Bag Deli Fast Casual Located in the former Antone’s space in the Houston Club building. Brown Bag Deli serves up tasty, fresh sandwiches “just like you like it.” Known for their fluffy, soft bread you won’t be disappointed and neither will your wallet. thebrownbagdeli.net. 810 Capitol, 713.224.7000. L Mon-Fri.  §

Burger King Fast Food 810 Capitol, 713.223.4114. B & D Mon-Sat; L Daily. $$

B.U.S. Sports Grill and Bar American The ultimate hangout spot before or after a ballgame. Come and enjoy your favorite cold beverage or bite to eat while cheering the home team to victory. B.U.S. is also a great place to catch the latest sporting event on the big screen! Two locations. Before/after Rockets games, 1410 Bell. Before/after Astros games, 1800 Texas.  §

Cabo Mexican The “Mix-Mex” grill is a spicy blend of South and Central American flavors. A fun downtown spot with the ultimate outdoor balcony for dining overlooking the streets of downtown. cabomixmex.com. 419 Travis, 713.225.2060. L & D Mon-Sun; L & LN Mon-Sat. $$

Cafe Express Fast Casual Need to grab a quick lunch? Cafe Express is an informal yet sophisticated choice. One of the originals in the fast casual restaurant category, you can always find a variety of delicious entrees, salads and sandwiches. cafe-express.com. 650 Main, 713.237.9222. B Mon-Fri; L & D Mon-Sat. $$

★ Cava Bistro American Bistro Enjoy a diverse menu when dining at this rustic eatery situated on Main Street in downtown’s Historic District. Menu items include escargot, kek tart, ahi tuna, short ribs, goschi and whole red snapper. An impressive wine list, great service and affordable prices make this bistro unique. bellarestaurants.com. 301 Main, 713.223.4068. L Mon-Fri; D Mon-Sat. $$

China Garden Chinese A popular Chinese restaurant, China Garden has been serving downtown for more than 30 years. Their egg rolls and lemon chicken have become favorites. Friendly service and a nice atmosphere are additional reasons this spot is a must, 1602 Leeland, 713.652.0745. L Mon-Fri; D Daily.  §

Chipotle Mexican Known for their large portions, this Mexican fast casual spot offers a variety of wholesome menu items. Chipotle is an affordable choice and with patio seating available, guests can enjoy their meal al fresco. chipotle.com. 909 Texas, 713.225.6633. L & Early D Mon-Fri.  §

★ Cielo Mexican This new upscale Mexican bistro oﬀers patrons Latin American favorites in a sophisticated, urban setting. Cielo has a fantastic bar and happy hour menu for late nights, also a large patio for al fresco dining. Tequila and wine tasting dinners will be offered monthly. bellarestaurants.com. 300 Main, 713.229.9500. L & D Mon-Sat; LN Fri & Sat. $$

★ Collin’s Chophouse & Whiskey Bar American Upscale, intimate dining experience in an elegant environment evokes the memory of a private supper club where you dine while enjoying the sounds of Sinatra and Fitzgerald. Chop house favorites include steaks, rack of lamb, cedar plank salmon and double pork chops. A cozy bar features an array of high-end whiskeys and a wide assortment of wines. bellarestaurants.com. 304 Main, 713.229.9500. D Mon-Sat. $$$$

KEY TO SYMBOLS

These listings are not reviews but are a guide to downtown dining spots. “Recommended” restaurants are selected by Downtown Magazine editors and are based on food quality, menu selection, service, ambience and value.

★ RECOMMENDED

$$$ - $10 or less

$$$ - $11-$19

$$$$ - $20-$29

$$$$$ - $30+

B: Breakfast

L: Lunch

D: Dinner

LN: Late Night

For a searchable database of downtown Houston restaurants by cuisine, location and price, visit houstondowntown.com and click on Dining.
Corner Bakery Fast Casual
A bakery café, offering fresh breads, salads, sandwiches, soups and sweets in a casual atmosphere. Located right on Main Street Square, you can’t beat the people watching or just relax and watch the rail line and Main Street Square’s jumping fountains. cornerbakery.com. 1000 Main, 713.651.0673. B & L Mon–Fri. $.

Craiganales Italian Deli Italian Deli

Decafe Fast Casual
Located in the lobby of the Hyatt Regency, visit this marketplace café anytime, day or night, when you are craving something delicious. Decafe offers brick oven pizza, deli sandwiches, salads, homemade pastries and, of course, an entire selection of your favorite coffee beverages. Hyatt Regency Hotel, 1200 Louisiana, 713.654.1234 x 4088. B, L & D Daily. $.

Domino’s Pizza
804 Main, 713.227.3030. $.

Don Diego Coffee House/Colombian
Open seven days a week for breakfast and lunch, this quaint neighborhood spot features Colombian breakfast specials served with plantains and black beans at affordable prices. Its cozy atmosphere, delicious coffee and desserts and free WIFI make it the perfect hang-out spot. BYOB. 208 Travis, 713–228–3560. L & D Mon–Sun. $.

Don Patron Bar & Grill Mexican

The Downtown Aquarium Seafood
The menu features a huge variety and offers something for everyone. While dining, guests are surrounded by a 150,000 gallon aquarium. Enjoy the sights and a great meal at this family-friendly spot. aquariumrestaurants.com. 410 Bagby, 713.223.3474. L, D & D Daily. $$.

Downtown Donuts Bakery
This little shop puts out a large assortment of breakfast goodies. Daily fresh baked choices include glazed, iced or filled donuts, bear claws, cinnamon rolls and turnovers and they also have kolaches—be sure to try the spicy boudin kolache. 1207 Prairie, 713.236.0500. B & L Mon–Fri. $.

Downtown Hunan Café Chinese
Fast casual spot offering all your Asian favorites. 613 Clay, 713.759.0515. L Mon–Fri. $.

Droubi Bro. Mediterranean Grill Mediterranean
This authentic Mediterranean grill offers up a quick and satisfying spot for lunch. Pita sandwiches are popular. 507 Dallas, 713.652.0058. L Mon–Fri. $.

Eats Mesquite Grill Classic American
Craving a burger downtown? Popular for their juicy burgers and great-tasting fries, Eats makes for a great lunchtime stop. Guests can make their burgers exactly how they like them. 804 Milam, 713.223.3287. L Mon–Fri. $.

El Rey Taqueria Cuban/Mexican
This fast casual Cuban and Mexican eatery is home to tasty plantains and juicy roasted chicken. El Rey opens early for those craving breakfast tacos and is open late on weekend nights for night owls craving a Cuban sandwich. elreytaqueria.com. 233 Main, 713.225.1895. B, L & D Mon–Sat; LN Fri & Sat. $.

Falafel Frenzy Mediterranean
This quaint spot serves up all your Mediterranean favorites, including beef and chicken kabobs, hummus and of course falafel. 914 Prairie, 713.237.8987. L, D & LN Mon–Sat. $.

Flying Saucer Pub Fare
Offering more than 200 beers, almost half on draft, Flying Saucer is a beer–drinker’s paradise. Excellent staff and tasty eats give the place an identity all its own. beerknurd.com. 705 Main, 713.228.7468. L, D & LN Daily. $.

Frank’s Pizza Pizza
Home of the “late–night slice,” Frank’s Pizza has built a quality reputation for itself serving up delicious food in a great atmosphere. Not only can you grab a slice of pizza, Frank’s also serves up darn good hamburgers, Philly cheesesteak sandwiches, Buffalo wings, lasagna and salads. frankspizza.com. 417 Travis, 713.225.5656. L & D Daily; LN Fri & Sat. $.
**The Grove American Rustic** This two-story, ultra-urban restaurant is found at Discovery Green, downtown Houston’s newest park. The menu features rustic American cuisine such as Gulf Coast seafood, steaks and signature rotisserie dishes. The Tree House roof deck bar features casual bar snacks and a see-and-be-seen atmosphere for cocktails. thegrovewest.com. Discovery Green, 1611 Lamar, 713.337.7321. I. Daily; D Tue-Sun. $$$

**Grum Bar & Grill Classic American** A casual dining and nightlife spot with a traditional bar and grill menu including pizzas, sandwiches, burgers and steaks. Comfortable atmosphere with walls featuring work by local artists, a wide selection of beers, good food and friendly staff make this a place you want to check out. 306 Main, 713.224.6448. I. Mon-Sat; D Thu-Sat. $$$

**Guadalajara del Centro Mexican** This family-owned restaurant consistently serves up tasty food in a sleek hacienda environment. It’s the perfect place to bring the family or a large group of co-workers or friends. Great happy hour specials. guadalajarahacienda.com. Houston Pavilions, 1201 San Jacinto, 713.650.0101. I & D Daily. $$

**Hard Rock Café Classic American** What do you get when you mix a music-themed diner with an All-American menu? Hard Rock is a great family-friendly spot serving up items such as burgers, nachos and chicken varieties. hardrock.com. Bayou Place, 570 Texas, 713.227.1392. I. D &LN Daily. $$

**Home Plate Bar & Grill Classic American** A great hangout spot before or after an Astros ballgame. Enjoy American food with all menu items (except for sampler platters) less than $10. homeplategrill.com. 1800 Texas, 713.222.1993. I. & D Daily (may close earlier during off-season so call first). $$

**Hong Kong Diner Chinese** A favorite of downtown locals, Hong Kong Diner will not disappoint with its expansive menu and delicious chef’s specials. Be sure to try their dumplings. 909 Franklin, 713.236.1688. I. & D Mon-Sat. $$


**Houston Tamales Factory Mexican** Family recipes made with fresh ingredients. Great breakfast tacos and of course the tamales are the specialty of the house. houstontamalefactory.com. 1205 Travis, 713.802.1800. B & I Mon-Fri. $$

**Hubcap Grill American Classic** Small but quaint burger joint. 1111 Prairie, 713.223.3885. I. Mon-Sat. $$

**Humble Cafe American** The Humble Cafe is a full-service restaurant serving up breakfast and dinner in a casual atmosphere. Courtyard by Marriott, 916 Dallas, 832.366.1600. B & D Daily. $$

**Hunan Downtown Chinese** You’ll be impressed by the elegant décor and their Chinese cuisine is as impeccable as the restaurant itself. Guests can indulge in traditional dishes or try new creations. 812 Capitol, 713.227.8999. I. D Mon-Sat. $$

**Irma’s Mexican** Irma Galvan has been crowned Houston’s Tex-Mex goddess. This authentic spot is a longtime favorite among Houston politicos and downtown business people. Traditional, home-cooked Mexican cuisine is served for breakfast and lunch on weekdays. 22 North Chenevert, 713.222.0767. B & I Mon-Fri. $$

**Irma’s New Southwest Grill Mexican** Irma’s second location is a hip spot to satisfy a Mexican food craving. Enjoy tasty foods and great drinks for lunch or dinner. Only a few short blocks from Minute Maid Park. irmassouthwest.com. 1314 Texas, 713.247.9651. B & I Mon-Fri. Open on Astros baseball game days and nights three hours before first pitch. $$

**James Coney Island Fast Food** This local favorite has been serving delicious hot dogs to downtown Houston patrons since 1923. The chilli recipe has stayed the same, but new menu additions include Polish sausage, a Chicago-style dog and a New York-style dog. jamesconyisland.com. 1142 Travis, 713.652.3819. I. & D Mon-Sat. $$

**Jason’s Deli Deli** Order to please, Jason’s will make your sandwich or salad exactly how you like it. jasonsdeli.com. 901 McKinney, 713.650.1500. B & I Mon-Fri. $ 

**Jimmy John’s Gourmet Sandwiches Deli** Try the tasty 8-inch subs starting at $3.50 for a “Plain Slim” (meat, cheese and bread only) or $7.75 for the “J.J. Gargantuian” which has five different meats. All subs are served on your choice of fresh baked French bread or thick sliced 7-grain bread or try the Low Carb Lettuce Wrap: all the regular sandwich ingredients without the bread. jimmyjohns.com. 820 Main, 713.222.9995. I. Mon-Sat. $$

**Josephine’s Ristorante Italian** Enjoy traditional favorites from scratch at this family-owned eatery. Great service and a cozy, casual atmosphere make you feel right at home. josephinestitalian.com. 1209 Caroline, 713.759.9323. I. Mon-Fri; D Mon-Sat. $$

**The Lake House Fast Casual** The Lake House offers family-friendly food, featuring burgers, Kobe beef hot dogs, salads, shakes, wine and beer. Located on Kinder Lake, there is a large patio where you can watch model boats race across the water or listen to some live music from the nearby amphitheater stage. thelakehousehouston.com. Discovery Green, 1611 Lamar, I. & D Tue-Sat. $$

**La Palapa Fast Food** A Courthouse District favorite, there’s always a line at this free-standing pink concession stand for breakfast tacos and hamburgers. 1110 Preston, 713.228.9620. B & I Mon-Fri. $$

**Last Concert Café Mexican** Tucked away in the Warehouse District, this Tex-Mex cafe was born in 1949 and still supplies tasty food and local music today. Spend some time on the leafy back patio and you’ll swear you’re in your neighbor’s backyard, throwing back a cold one. lastconcertcafe.com, 1403 Nance, 713.226.8563. I. Mon-Thu; D Tue-Sun; LN Fri-Sat; Bar & Live Music Tue-Sat. $$

**Les Givral’s Kahve Vietnamese** Winner of the 2006 “City’s Best” award for Vietnamese restaurants in Houston, Les Givral’s offers up a delicious menu and great service. Located in downtown’s historic Market Square. lesgivrais.com. 801 Congress, 713.547.0444. B Mon-Fri; I Mon-Sat; D Fri & Sat. $ 

**Little Napoli Italian** Offering southern Italian items in a casual setting, you can opt for indoor seating or take a spot on their large patio right on Main Street. Their healthy options, such as whole wheat pizza crust and low-fat cheeses are a nice touch. littlenapoli.net. 1001 Texas, 713.225.3900. I. D & LN Daily. $$

**Longhorn Café Homestyle** Longhorn offers up a Texas-style experience. Old-fashioned burgers, sandwiches and fries contribute to the down-south feel of the café. longhorncafe.com. The Shops at Houston Center, 1200 McKinney, 713.751.0021. I. Mon-Sat; D Mon-Fri. $ 

**Mandarin Hunan Restaurant Chinese** This upscale eatery gives its guests an engaging experience in Chinese cuisine. Located in the Skyline District, Mandarin’s floor-to-ceiling glass windows provide a great view of the streetscape. 777 Walker, 713.224.1212. I. & D Mon-Fri. $$

**Market Square Bar & Grill American** This Chicago-style neighborhood hangout is a local favorite. Boasting a handful of “fire-powered” burgers, Market Square offers plenty of reasons to stop by for a meal or drink. The backyard patio, friendly staff and full bar add flavor. marketsquarehouston.com. 311 Travis, 713.224.6133. I. & D LN Mon-Sat. $$

**Massa’s Restaurant Seafood** An upscale and elegant restaurant offering a fine selection of American and seafood cuisine. Superior service and a great dining atmosphere allow guests to enjoy a memorable experience. massas.com. 1160 Smith, 713.650.0887. I. Mon-Fri; D Mon-Sat. $$

**Massa’s Seafood Grill Seafood** Like its sister restaurant, you can count on superior service and a great dining atmosphere. Conveniently located close to the convention center and Toyota Center, it’s a great spot for lunch and dinner. massas.com. The Shops at Houston Center, 1331 Lamar, 713.655.9100. I. Mon-Fri; D Mon-Sat. $$

**McCormick & Schmick’s Seafood** The extensive menu changes daily depending on each day’s fresh seafood deliveries. With more than 80 preparations on the menu each day, every guest is sure to find something to satisfy their palate. mccormickandschmicks.com. Houston Pavilions, 1201 Fannin. I. & D Daily. $$$

**McDonald’s Fast Food** 808 Dallas @ Milam, 713.651.9449. B & I. Daily; D Mon-Fri. $$

**Mia Bella Italian** Located in the heart of the Historic District, you’ll enjoy an eclectic variety of Italian cuisine blended with a Mediterranean feel. A long-time favorite, this intimate little bistro’s simple, yet appealing décor, makes it a downtown standout. bellarestaurants.com 320 Main, 713.237.0505. I. & D Daily; LN Fri & Sat. $$

**Mingaloe Italian Bar & Grill Italian** A dedication to authentic Italian cuisine makes Mingaloe a special place. Just seconds away from all the major theaters, Mingaloe is the perfect spot to enjoy dinner before or after a show. mingaloe.com. Bayou Place, 340 Texas, 713.223.0888. I. & D Mon-Sun. $$
Molly’s Pub Fare  A good ol’ Irish bar with tasty food to soak up the beer. Your standard pub fare — sandwiches, dogs and pretty much anything that’s not good for you. mollyspubs.com. 509 Main, 713.222.1033. L, D & LN Daily. $

★ Morton’s The Steakhouse Steak House  This award-winning steakhouse offers an outstanding menu. The downtown location features their new bar concept, Bar 12-21, which includes an impressive wine and martini menu along with their specially priced “bar bites.” mortons.com. 1001 McKinney, 713.659.3700. D Mon-Sun. $$$$

Murphy’s Deli Deli  Indulge in a variety of sandwiches and salads. Hot or cold, Murphy’s specializes in creating your sandwich any way it’s ordered. 601 Jefferson, 713.652.4393. 1021 Main, 713.275.1912. 440 Louisiana, 713.247.9112. B & L Mon–Fri all locations. $$

New Orleans Cajun Po-Boy Fast Food  A great place to grab a fried shrimp or crawfish po-boy. 648 Polk, 713.750.0007. L Mon–Fri. – $

★ New York Pizzeria Pizza  604 Polk, 713.759.9800. L Mon–Fri; D Tue–Fri. – $

★ Pappas BBQ Barbecue  Voted one of Houston’s best year after year, this barbecue joint offers an excellent selection with Texas-sized portions. Traditional favorites such as brisket, ribs, sausage and ham are served with Pappas’ flare. Delivery and take-out are available. pappas.com 1217 Pierce, 713.659.1245. L & D Daily. 1100 Smith, 713.759.0018. L & D Mon–Fri. – $

Paul’s Snack Shop Deli Sandwiches, salads and snacks to-go. 1213 Prairie, 713.224.4701. B & L Mon–Fri. – $

★ Perbacco Italian  An adorabe little spot located at street level of one of Houston’s skyscrapers, Perbacco serves up Italian cuisine in a modern and fresh atmosphere. Catering to downtown workers and the theater crowd, you always get quick and friendly service and tasty food. 700 Milam, 713.224.2422. L Mon–Fri; D Thu–Sat. – $$$

Picazo Bar & Grill International  Picazo’s very diverse menu features everything from pizza and salad to prime steaks and signature martinis. Picazo offers free downtown delivery and full-service catering. picazodowntown.com. 1421 Preston, 713.236.1300. B & L Mon–Fri; D Mon–Sat. – $ $$

Plaza Bistro Fast Casual  Kick back at Jones Plaza and enjoy a quick bite to eat. Plaza Bistro also serves up treatments during scheduled Jones Plaza events. 600 Louisiana, Jones Plaza, 713.226.8850. L Mon–Fri. Also open for plaza events. – $

Ponte Vecchio Ristorante Italiano Italian  Don’t let the cafeteria-style service at Ponte Vecchio fool you, everything is prepared from scratch. You’ll find many delicious, healthy selections on the menu at this luncheon eatery, all at a reasonable price. alpointevecchio.com. 507 Dallas, 713.659.9400. L Mon–Fri. – $

Popeye’s Fast Food  1116 Travis, 713.571.8600. L & D Mon–Sat. – $

★ Quattro Contemporary Italian  Vivid colors, creative lighting and a unique design create a sophisticated and inviting ambience for guests. Located in the Four Seasons Hotel, Quattro is one of downtown’s best restaurants. Four Seasons Hotel, 1300 Lamar, 713.652.6250. B, L & D Daily. $$$

Quizno’s Fast Food  811 Rusk, 713.227.7702. L & D Mon–Fri; 1119 Commerce, 713.228.9000. L Mon–Sat; D Mon–Fri. – $

Rachel’s Sandwich Shop Deli  A good little sandwich shop. 421 San Jacinto, 713.223.3913. B & L Mon–Fri. – $

Red & White Bistro International  A Chef’s Table buffet features a variety of world cuisines and an assortment of delectable desserts. Compliment your meal with a selection from Red & White’s two 1,500 bottle wine towers. houstontoyotacenters.com. 1510 Polk, 713.758.7534. Open 90 minutes prior to the start of Toyota Center events; call ahead for reservations. – $$$

Red Cat Jazz Café Cajun  Cajun style blends with Houston flavor at the Red Cat. Indulge in the distinct ambience, cuisine and sounds offered at this laid-back spot. Live music nightly. redcatjazzcafe.com. 924 Congress, 713.226.7870. D & LN Daily. – $

★ Sambuca Jazz Café New American  A hip, trendy and upscale restaurant right in the mix of Main Street. The menu includes a wide variety of favorites and combined with the live music, Sambuca is Houston’s ultimate supper club. sambucarestaurant.com. 909 Texas, 713.224.5299. L Mon–Fri & Sun; D & LN Daily. $$$

SG’s Express Vietnamese Vietnamese  You’ll find all your Vietnamese favorites here: vermicelli bowl, the sandwich, egg drop soup, egg rolls and many different smoothie flavors. 1225 Travis, 713.659.0200. L & D Tue–Fri. – $

Shay McElroy’s Pub Fare  This authentic Irish pub offers up a menu of appetizers, sandwiches, salads and soups. mcelroypub.com. 909 Texas, 713.223.2444. L Mon–Fri. – $

The Shops at Houston Center Food Court  Chick-Fil-A, Don Patron Bar & Grill, Doozo Dumpling & Noodles, Droubi Bros. Grill, Great American Cookies, Longhorn Uptown Café, Mediterranean Grill, Murphy’s Deli, Ninfa’s, Planet Smoothie, Portbely Sandwich Works, Quizno’s, Roman Delight, Salatta, Simon’s Homestyle Café, Starbucks, Subway, Teppanyaki, Wall Street Deli, Wok & Roll. shopsathc.com. 1200 McKinney, 713.759.1442. Mon–Sat, hours vary. – $

★ Shula’s American Steak House Steak House  Dark wood, sports memorabilia and menus hand-painted on official NFL game footballs makes Pro Hall of Famer Don Shula’s Steak House stand out from the rest. Become a member of the 48oz Club by finishing a 48-ounce Shula Cut. donshularestaurant.com. Hyatt Regency Hotel, 1200 Louisiana, 713.375.4777. B, L & D Daily. $$$

Skyline Deli Deli  With their freshly baked bread, Skyline makes a great deli sandwich. 717 Texas, 713.571.0509. B & L Mon–Fri. – $

★ Spaghetti Warehouse Italian  Making its home in an old warehouse, this Italian-American eatery offers up large portions for lunch and dinner. Traditional menu items such as spaghetti and meatballs, lasagna and pizza allow the Spaghetti Warehouse to cater to all ages and appetites. 901 Commerce, 713.229.0009. L & D Daily. – $

Spencer’s for Steaks and Chops Steak House  An ideal location to enjoy a great steak, Spencer’s offers top-quality beef and boasts an extensive wine list. The atmosphere is light, engaging and conducive to conversation. Hilton Americas, 1600 Lamar, 713.577.8325. L Mon–Fri; D Mon–Sat. $$$$$$

State Bar Pub Fare  Located on the second floor of Post Rice Lofts with a beautiful balcony overlooking Texas Ave., this upscale lounge also serves appetizers and hearty sandwiches with your martinis and margaritas. thestatebar.com. 909 Texas, Suite 2A, 713.229.8888. Mon–Sat. – $

★ Strip House Steak House  Only minutes from the convention center and Toyota Center, Strip House’s mouth-watering steaks are accompanied by a seductive ambiance. Red walls and carpet give this steak palace a unique interior. An international collection of wines puts the finishing touches on the restaurant. striphouse.net. The Shops at Houston Center, 1200 McKinney, 713.659.6000. L Mon–Fri; D Daily; LN Fri & Sat. – $$$$$$

Subway Fast Food  405 Main, 713.227.4700. 805 Dallas, 713.651.1331. Daily. – $

★ Table 7 Bistro American  With their classic American menu, the eatery is the perfect place to enjoy everything from salads and burgers to blackened mahi mahi and turkey meatloaf. Lasagna. The best part – every item on the menu costs $11 or less. district7grill.com. 720 Fannin, 713.227.4800. B Mon–Sun; L & D Mon–Sat. – $

Thai Brick Cafe Thai  Located in the Warehouse District, the cafe serves up Thai dishes with a home-cooked flair. So in Monday through Saturday for lunch and enjoy inexpensive lunch specials that include soup, salad and egg roll. BYOB. 1302 Nance, 713.222.7772. L & D Mon–Sat. – $

Thephitida Thai Thai  Located at the ground level of the loft residence Hogg Palace, Thephitida is a traditional Thai restaurant. The warm and cozy atmosphere offers a great setting for a dinner escape and is a local favorite. 401 Louisiana, 713.225.4900. D Daily. – $

Timpano Chophouse & Martini Bar Steak House/Italian  Reminiscent of the classic restaurants and clubs of Chicago and New York, Timpano Chophouse & Martini Bar embodies the big-city dining experience with flavorful steaks, chops and pasta in a sophisticated setting. timpanochophouse.net. 610 Main, 713.223.2622. L Mon–Fri; D Mon–Sun; LN Fri & Sat. $$$$$$

Travis Chinese Restaurant Chinese  All your favorites at affordable prices. 1122 Travis, 713.655.8787. L Daily. – $

★ Treebeards Cajun Homestyle  A downtown institution for more than 30 years, Treebeards offers tasty Cajun dishes that are sure to satisfy. Favorite menu items include the chicken and shrimp gumbo, red beans and rice and étouffée. For dessert, try their famous butter bar. treebeards.com. 315 Travis, 713.228.2622. Clossters at Christ Church Cathedral, 1117 Texas, 713.229.8248. L Mon–Fri. – $
Trofi Restaurant **Continental** Trofi’s menu is described as Continental with a Mediterranean and Latin flair and the ambience is casual simple yet sophisticated. Lunch buffets are available Monday through Friday. 400 Dallas, Doubletree Hotel, 713.759.0202. B, L & D Daily. $$

**Vic & Anthony’s Steak House** This world-class steak house is one of the most elegant dinning locations in Houston. It boasts rich mahogany woodwork and one-of-a-kind hospitality. Located in the heart of the Ballpark District and across from Minute Maid Park, Vic & Anthony’s is the ideal spot for entertaining business clients, a special celebration or for a pre/post-game dinner. vicandanthonys.com. 1510 Texas, 713.228.1111. L Fri; D Daily. $$$$$

**Voice Restaurant & Lounge Modern American** Located in the historic lobby of Hotel Icon’s landmark bank building, Voice offers guests an exquisite fine dining experience. The intimate dining room is extravagant, and the food speaks for itself with items from the Gulf Coast and South Texas and an emphasis on fresh ingredients. A contemporary lounge offers downtown patrons a modern setting for cocktails and an elegant after-work meeting place. hotelicon.com. Hotel Icon, 220 Main, 832.667.4470. B Daily; D Mon-Sat. $$$$$

**Warren’s Inn Fast Casual** The good times roll with a killer jukebox, excellent drinks, and a fun, bohemian environment. Quick sandwiches and other items are served during the day; you can order in from nearby restaurants at night if you have the munchies. 307 Travis, 713.247.9207. L Mon–Fri; LN Daily. $$$$ Wimpy’s Hamburger **Fast Food** Wimpy’s serves up a pretty good burger but they also have many other down-home favorites. 632 Polk, 713.652.0123. B & L Mon–Fri. $$

**Yatra Brasserie Indian Fusion** Indian dishes as well as some new recipes are found at downtown’s new Indian-fusion restaurant. Sample everything from Indian-inspired burgers to curried chicken at this atmospheric hotspot. yatrabrasserie.com. 706 Main Street, 713.224.6700. L Mon–Fri; D Mon–Sat. $$

**Zero’s Sandwich Shop Deli** A great little spot for a freshly made deli sandwich. zeroandthelaw.com. 809 Dallas, 713.650.3333. 1110 Lamar, 713.655.7722. 507 Dallas, 713.739.9955. L Mon–Fri. $$ Zula **New American** This eclectic restaurant is memorable with its 25-foot ceilings, mirrors and elaborate color scheme. The menu offers traditional favorites along with new, innovative items. zulahouston.com. 705 Main, 713.227.7052. L Mon–Fri; D Mon–Sat. $$$

**Zydeco Louisiana Diner** This cafeteria-style Cajun joint brings Louisiana dishes to the Hospital District of downtown Houston. Traditional Cajun items such as po-boys, jambalaya and gumbo make Zydeco a great lunch stop. A casual atmosphere adds to the enjoyment. 1119 Pease, 713.759.2001. L Mon–Fri. $

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Growing up in Houston was amazing! I will always love Houston. It is a great place to live and raise a family.

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I LOVE to eat at James Coney Island and eat chili dogs and frito pies. I love Mexican food at Escalante’s. To this day, I think that Houston has the best food anywhere in the world!

Houston is a great city to visit, to shop and eat, and meet nice people. I always like to go to Neiman’s for lunch and shopping.

I love to go to the Houston Rodeo. It is a time to celebrate being a true American and enjoy life with family and friends. The Houston Rodeo has been a longtime tradition for my family over many decades.

For the rest of Hilary’s thoughts and to find out what others are saying, log on to VisitMyHouston.com.
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