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The future of Texas cuisine: How five top chefs see it



Chef Tim Byres' live Gulf blue crabs steamed with vinegar and marigold, served with coal-and-husk-roasted honey-buttered fresh corn

by LESLIE BRENNER

photographs by MANNY RODRIGUEZ

Modern Texas cuisine has, at last, arrived. It has been a long time coming — three decades. Stephan Pyles and Dean Fearing, as part of the Southwestern cuisine movement of the 1980s, helped get it started, and both have continued to celebrate the bounty of Texas and its cooking traditions over time. Then Tim Byres and partners opened Smoke in 2009, fire-breathing new energy into the genre. Now, chefs such as Jeff Harris at AF+B in Fort Worth and Michael Sindoni at CBD Provisions in Dallas are, with their inventive plates, bringing the idea to its full expression. What exactly *is* Modern Texas cuisine? Dining editor LESLIE BRENNER asked each to create a dish that answers the question — and foretells the future.



TIM BYRES + CRAB + VINEGAR + MARIGOLD + CORN

"I find the most enjoyment and meaning when it can all be stripped back raw, cooked in a primal, basic way and served in a larger format — an extravaganza." Byres steams the live crabs in a covered clay pot with creamer potatoes, okra, fennel, shallots, garlic and small tomatoes in a broth touched with vinegar and scented with fresh Mexican mint marigold leaves. For the corn, he peels back the husk over his fist, removes the silk, rubs the kernels with soft butter, a drizzle of honey, salt and a sprinkle of barbecue spice, then ties the husk back in place and cooks it in hot coals. The dish isn't on his menu: It is something he'd serve to friends — with pickles, beer, iced tea and chile sauce — or offer at the restaurant for a special party. "To me, this is real Texas food," he says. "Real, gritty and invitingly modern." It is very much in the spirit of his James Beard Award-winning cookbook, *Smoke: New Firewood Cooking*.



Live Gulf blue crabs steamed with vinegar and marigold, served with coal-and-husk-roasted honey-buttered fresh corn, photograph by MANNY RODRIGUEZ

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