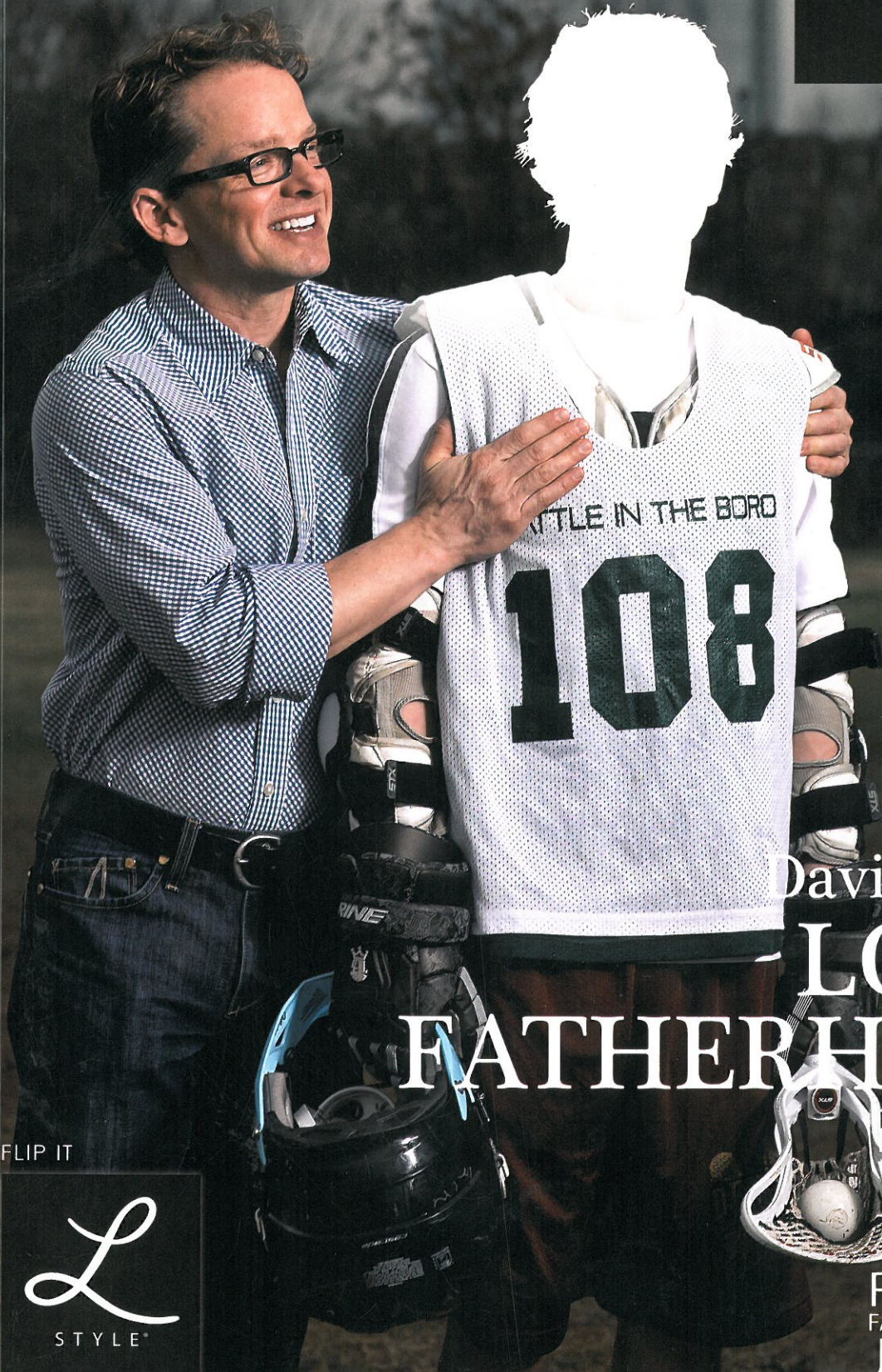




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David Parson
**LOVES
FATHERHOOD**

PULITZER PRIZE
WINNER
TONY KUSHNER

REVEALING
FAMILY MATTERS WITH
JAY BILLIG

FLIP IT



GO AHEAD... HAVE A BITE

BY CHRISTOPHER CARBONE
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY FEATURED RESTAURANTS

Whoever said good things don't come in small packages hasn't checked out these six culinary destinations.



Barley Swine

Our first foray into Barley Swine, Bryce Gilmore's outpost of locally sourced, heavy-on-the-pork deliciousness was late one winter night not long after it opened. With a group of friends, we sampled all of the menu's small plate offerings (they recommend three per person), partnering them with thirst-quenching choices from the restaurant's generous and varied beer menu. The inventive pairings of flavor and texture are key to its seasonal menu (be advised: some of these items might be adjusted or changed by the time you read this). Soft, moist sweetbreads meet the crunch of brussel sprouts and braised bacon, and sea-fresh scallops and shellfish butter (butter improves everything, just saying) with white asparagus delight the palate. The tiny, rustic space fills up quickly, so arrive early or be prepared to wait.

2024 S. Lamar Blvd., 394-8150,
barleyswine.com



Foreign & Domestic

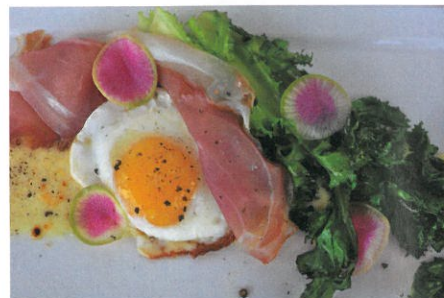
When chef/owners Ned and Jodi Elliot opened Foreign & Domestic in the North Loop area a year ago, there were some doubters. Not us. This husband-and-wife team's creativity, deft combination of familiar and exotic cooking techniques and preparations has made the spot a mainstay for many food lovers. A few of our South Austin friends regularly make the trek up just to enjoy their much-beloved venison heart tartare, a staple on the restaurant's season menu, topped in the picture above with an egg. If you're going on a culinary adventure, start here.

306 East 53rd St., 459-1010, fndaustin.com

Olivia

Whether you're in the light-filled dining room or the cozy bar at the back of the space, there's a plethora of items to choose from that are perfect for sharing. We love to start with the cheese or charcuterie plate and a selection from Olivia's wine list. You can't go wrong with the beef tartare, paired with capers and jalapenos. The South Austin tapas-grapefruit brulee, onion rings, deviled eggs—are a mainstay. Go outside of your comfort zone and try the housemade prosciutto with, pictured at right escarole and watermelon radishes—trust us, you won't regret it.

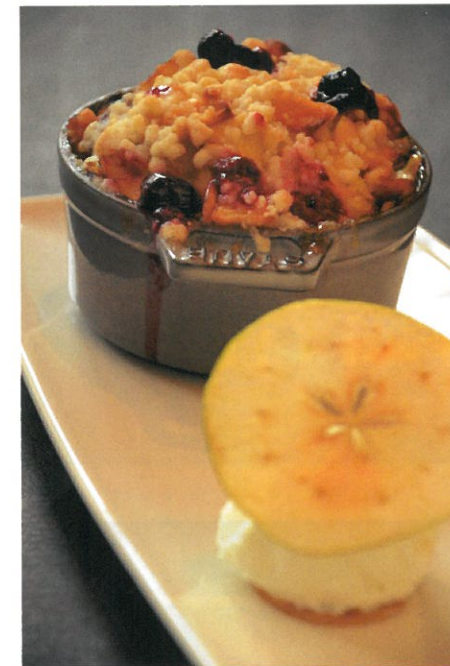
2043 S. Lamar Blvd., 804-2700, olivia-austin.com



Trio at the Four Seasons

You're perched on the patio in your polo shirt and topsiders—okay, you're probably in Converse All Stars and a vintage T-shirt but who's keeping track? There's the hint of a breeze, and a glass of Pinot Grigio and plate of oysters on the half-shell sit on the table. As you savor each oyster, you might think you're in New England. Fortunately, you don't need to book a flight to Martha's Vineyard. The delectable food, usually perfect for sharing, along with the restaurant's location on Lady Bird Lake, will make your visit a transformative experience. To top off the evening, sink your teeth into the black and white crème brulee. It's an explosion of rich, chocolately goodness that you won't soon forget.

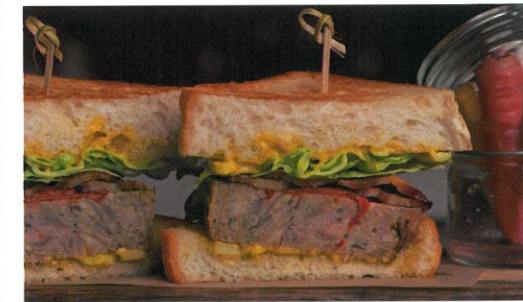
98 San Jacinto Blvd., 685-8300, triorestaurantaustin.com



Trace at W Austin

Trace does not wear its awesomeness with garish neon lights or breathless pronouncements. Nestled comfortably at the base of the W Austin, it's an understated culinary gem. Although you might see a council member or rock musician with entourage in tow wander through, it's all about the food here. Specifically, the restaurant's in-house forager, is on a mission to make sure Trace's menu is as locally sourced and socially responsible as possible. The rabbit club sandwich carries a kick and is just filling enough. The cobbler is an ideal way to end your meal with something warm and comforting. On summer nights that drive you indoors, saddle up to the bar and order one of the restaurant's inventive cocktails from the talented bar, cute staff.

200 Lavaca St., 542-3660, traceaustin.com



Second Bar + Kitchen

There are many reasons to love this restaurant. From the attentive, highly informed staff to the elegant minimalism of designer Amber Lewis' interior, that harkens to the space's former incarnation as an auto repair shop, we (like many) believe that Chef David Bull and his team are taking Austin's food culture to new heights. Order a few of these smaller plates and share with your friends: the black truffle pomme frites, topped with truffle oil, are addictive; topped with seared foie gras, purely decadent. The pepperoni soup, warm, rich and meaty, is pizza in a bowl, while the fried egg and avocado sandwich on nine grain bread—the topping of sweet onion relish seals the deal—is healthy and satisfying. End your experience by nibbling on the tiny, fudge-like brownies or the shortbread cookies (cube-sized bites of sugary yum). The sweet bites are so tiny, you just can't feel guilty.

200 Congress Ave., 827-2750, congressaustin.com

