

# Good Grace

With perfectly conceptualized dishes and a chic atmosphere, Grace ups the ante for Cowtown's culinary scene.



Executive Chef Blaine Staniford

**S**erving beautifully plated "modern American classics" with local ingredients, Grace has quickly established itself as one of the Metroplex's top restaurants, and rightly so. Each dish is carefully arranged, with all its ingredients working in concordance, blending to create a masterpiece. Like beautiful harmonies, the supporting flavors' pitches blend, creating depth and balance to the main ingre-

dients' melodies. The ingredients sing in accord, creating a song of consonant flavors and perfectly dissonant textures. If dishes were songs, most restaurants write melodies; Grace composes symphonies.

Adam Jones, Del Frisco's long-time former manager and one of Fort Worth's most experienced restaurateurs, opened the restaurant Nov. 17, naming it for his wife, Caroline Grace. With Culinary Institute of America graduate Blaine Staniford as the executive chef, the upscale restaurant boasts an experienced staff that Jones gleaned from the area's best restaurants. A staff of extremely knowledgeable servers describes dishes' ingredients, and additional servers ensure that glasses and bread plates are always full.

Low lighting and a few modern chandeliers drop from Grace's tiered ceiling. Expansive windows surround the dining room, offering views of Main Street. Chocolate-colored booths and comfortable, high-quality leather chairs surround white linen-topped tables. No corners were cut creating Grace. Even server stations are topped with granite. Wood and stainless steel punctuate the space with a touch of masculinity, balanced with feminine mirrored accents. Upbeat, contemporary music plays over the speakers, adding to the impeccable ambience.

But the atmosphere is only part of the restaurant's appeal; it's the food that truly sets it apart. Each dish's ingredients are meant to be eaten together to fully experience the flavors. An appetizer of crispy fried oysters is served on a bed of sautéed baby

spinach. A rich, not-too-heavy brown butter pepper sauce plays off Louisiana hot sauce. The tender oysters contrast with the fried breadcrumbs' slight crunch. Crispy slices of pepperoni add yet another layer of flavor and texture.

Washington oysters on the half shell—served on a bed of rock salt—are topped with butter-poached king crab, velvety rich crème fraiche and caviar. Schramsberg Blanc de Blancs sparkling white wine complements the delicate flavors.

Entrée options include rich house-made jumbo shrimp ravioli in a smoked seafood broth made with shellfish. Bold seafood flavors from the stock flavor the meat-filled tubes of tender pasta. Texas English peas in the broth add delicacy and subtle sweetness.

For red-meat lovers, it doesn't get any better than the Meyer Ranch all-natural beef. The grass-fed beef is raised in Montana away from common cattle stressors, including motorized vehicles. The result is unrivaled flavor and texture. Though it sounds odd, the 6-ounce filet has a smooth, silky texture. Seared medium rare and simply seasoned with kosher salt and pepper, the beef's pure flavors sing. The more masculine 18-ounce bone-in strip's fat, rather than being grisly, does what it's meant to do—add more flavor.

A la carte sides, which serve three to four people, include slightly sweet creamed corn with smoky bits of ham for down-home flavor. A mature version of peas and carrots—fresh baby root carrots and yellow and green

snow peas in their pods—are perfectly crisp. Asparagus and mushrooms include cremini, button and portabella mushrooms with a farm-fresh poached egg on top. The egg's butteriness and yolk act as a simple hollandaise, the more traditional accompaniment to asparagus. Adding another layer of texture, the egg paradoxically incorporates hominess and decadence.

For dessert, Pot (pronounced "poe") de Creme is an indulgent option. Fit for a queen, a warm trio of dark, milk and white chocolate puddings are made with French Valrhona chocolate, regarded as one of the world's best. A dollop of fresh, fluffy whipped cream and chocolate shavings top the custards.

A lighter choice, an assortment of 100 percent cows' milk cheeses from Waco's Brazos County Creamery includes creamy and mild cheddar, unique sage derby, double-cream brie and havarti cheeses; sweet agave nectar drizzled over crunchy toasted almonds; and a side of rhubarb jam and house-made croutons.

Fans of molten cakes favor the dense, rich chocolate pudding cake with organic vanilla ice cream manufactured at Plano's Henry's Homemade Ice Cream. There's also carrot cake topped with powdered sugar, plump golden raisins and fried carrots. Its center is a sweet, gooey play off the more traditional cream cheese icing. Lemony, dense pound cake with seasonal berries, house-made whipped cream and a sprig of mint is a fresh-tasting dessert option. **fw**

**DINING ROOM:**  
**Monday–Thursday** 5:30-9:30 p.m.  
**Friday and Saturday** 5:30-10:30 p.m.  
**BAR:**  
**Monday–Thursday** 4-11 p.m.  
**Saturday** 5:30 p.m. –midnight  
 777 Main St., Fort Worth  
 817.877.3388, gracefortworth.com **\$\$\$\$**



## Wine 101

The world of wine and wine tasting doesn't have to be intimidating.

**The Perfect Pair** For a wine that can stand up to the Meyer Ranch steak, try a glass of J Vineyards Pinot Noir from the Russian River Valley. Light to medium garnet in the glass, this wine has a gorgeous concocted nose of herbs, roasted meat and red berries. Light on its feet with restrained tannins, this 2006 wine finishes beautifully and works well with the hearty, full-flavored steak, or even the Colorado rack of lamb.



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