

PART ONE FASHION PART TWO LUXURY

# INDULGE

THE ART OF LIVING WELL DECEMBER 2008

## Haute Cold

Get on board with bold styling and dramatic details on coats.

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Fort Worth restaurateur Adam Jones named his new establishment for his wife, Caroline Grace Jones, and the two worked together to bring the dream to fruition.

Adam Jones' long-awaited establishment  
lives up to the anticipation.

# Say Grace

BY JUNE NAYLOR

PHOTOS BY ROSS HAILEY

**F**riends and clients have dubbed him the mayor of downtown Fort Worth, and Adam Jones is clearly ready to serve his constituency once again.

On Nov. 17, the much-loved restaurateur opened Grace, the highly anticipated dining and drinking destination at the corner of Seventh and Main streets, off the lobby of the Carter-Burgess Building. It was two-plus years in the making, and so eager were his customers for a taste of Grace's modern-American-classics menu and Jones' renowned brand of personal hospitality that they began booking tables last summer.

Naming it for his wife, Caroline Grace Jones, Jones brought to fruition an idea that hatched during his decade-long tenure as general manager at Del Frisco's Double Eagle Steakhouse, a block away.

"Fort Worth has great little haunts that everyone loves, but no one has built an establishment," Jones said a few days before opening. "I wanted to create a place

MORE ON L14



Drinks with an ice cube called "the rock," left, stay cold without being watered down. At right is a pomegranate royale, a mix of cava rosé, housemade grenadine, Pernod and bitters.

## Say Grace

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that's very much about food and drink but where we also put the focus on having fun, closing deals and celebrating anniversaries."

Because Del Frisco's had developed "a corporate feel," Jones said, he decided in 2006 that it was time to move on. He'd logged nearly 20 years in downtown Fort Worth (he opened Prego Pasta House in Sundance Square before Del Frisco's) and during those years, he built a fiercely loyal clientele. As a result, he was able to gather a team of 24 limited partners from the Fort Worth business community to finance a new landmark restaurant almost midway between his former workstations at either end of downtown.

Never before has anyone created a 400-seat restaurant in a Fort Worth office building space that had no previous food-service tenant, meaning construction brought formidable challenges. Jones said that the job of meeting city codes offered far more than the usual obstacles, all of which had to be dealt with while he put together a dream-team staff.

But being a born problem-solver with unbridled enthusiasm — he's very convincing when explaining how much he loved working in the fast-food business early in his career — Jones made it all work.

### Inspired decor

Having looked for inspiration during five years of trips to Napa, Chicago, New York and Italy, Adam and Caroline Jones, 47 and 43, respectively, knew precisely the effect they aimed to achieve. In Rome and Tuscany, they reveled in food that was "simple, fresh, clean," and vowed to offer a place with these natural but elegant sensibilities.



Caroline Jones, an interior designer, worked with the architecture and design team as project manager. The couple wanted Grace to have natural surfaces and a soft palette, she says.

And in New York, the couple visited and revisited their favorite bistros and dining rooms to figure out what atmosphere and table look to put before clientele in Fort Worth.

Their favorite remains the Four Seasons Hotel restaurant in New York, a tasteful study dating from 1949.

Caroline, an interior designer, said, "The Four Seasons never goes out of style, and that's what we want here. We didn't want trendy, we weren't looking for a steakhouse or anything with a theme."

So, organically tuned into the needs for Grace, Caroline

joined the Fort Worth architecture-design group Firm 817 as project manager for the job. Working with principal Joe Self, Caroline brought the Grace goals to life.

"The feel we wanted was about natural surfaces and a soft palette," she said, noting the polished granite counters in shades of ochre, mustard, cinnamon and dark chocolate. Instead of the dark woods so common in clubby steakhouse settings, Grace features plenty of large windows, stainless steel and walnut.

# Say Grace

CONTINUED FROM L14

Although it seats 180, the dining room doesn't feel cavernous or impersonal. There are primarily tables seating twos and fours, with plentiful banquettes along one wall. The ceiling is composed of clouds, or panels placed at varying heights — 9, 11, 12 and 13 feet — “so you don't feel like you're in an office space,” Adam said.

There's an elaborately engineered lighting system, too, with four light levels in the cocktail area and dining room: The lights in the bar dim a bit at 3:50 p.m., reminding the staff that bar customers will soon arrive when those doors open at 4 p.m. Likewise, dining room lights dim somewhat at 5:15 p.m. in anticipation of a 5:30 p.m. opening.

New for Fort Worth is the private-dining option that Grace brings: There are four separate rooms seating a total of 110, with high-tech audiovisual capabilities, including 52-inch plasma screens and wireless Internet connection. This, combined with the elevated levels of food, wine and service at Grace, fills a void in the local executive-meetings market.

What's more, Grace is positioned to pull in customers who want a sophisticated drink and nosh before going to the ballet or a concert at Bass Hall, as well as friends who'd like to have a fashionable cocktail hour before heading to a fancy dinner at the Petroleum Club, upstairs in the same building.

The cocktail area, separated from the dining room by the entrance, seats 75 at the bar and at small tables; just outside, there's room for an additional 25 in lounge seating on the patio, the only place where tobacco is allowed. Adam cited Gramercy Tavern in New York as one of the inspirations for the bar experience.

Inside, there's a separate cocktail menu with bar snacks — count on onion rings and short rib sliders to become big hits — and a list of intriguing drinks, mostly glamorous twists on classics ingredients from the golden age of cocktails, such as Lillet, herbsaint and Pernod. Early favorites appear to be the pomegranate royale, an old-fashioned, wide-bowl champagne glass filled with a mix of cava rosé, housemade grenadine, Pernod and bitters. Imbibers who love sipping bourbon on the rocks will be enamored of “the rock,” a single oversize ice cube that won't water down the drink.

## Wunderkind staff

It's the food and wine, of course, that seem destined to bring acclaim to Grace. To find just the right chef, Adam Jones employed a headhunter. “I chased people



Pork belly with braised cabbage and pearl onions, top, and veal Milanese.

## A sampling of the menus

### From the cocktail menu:

- Microbrew onion rings, \$6
- Short rib sloppy Joe sliders, \$8
- Kobe pigs in blankets, \$9
- East/West Coast oysters, \$15-\$30
- Bosc pear martini, \$12
- Grace Sazerac, \$9
- Pomegranate royale, \$10
- Wines by the glass, \$8-\$20

### From the dining room menu:

- Berkshire fresh bacon (pork belly) with cider-braised cabbage, \$10
- Crispy fried oysters with baby spinach, \$11
- Meyer Ranch natural filet, \$34
- Butternut squash ravioli, \$22
- Veal chop Milanese, \$38
- Butter-poached Maine lobster, \$59



Grace's elaborate light system has four light levels in the cocktail area and dining room, and lights in the bar dim at 3:50 p.m., 10 minutes before doors open to bar patrons.

all over the country. I knew I needed a Hyde Park Culinary Institute graduate.”

One was a chef at the late BLT Steak in Dallas, others came from country club work. After long months, a new face suddenly appeared in mid-summer, and it was the right one. Someone suggested Jones look at Blaine Staniford, wunderkind chef at Fuse and Scene in Dallas, and everything fell quickly into place.

Jones says that Staniford — who graduated from the Culinary Institute of America at age 19 and has worked at such high-profile places as Aquavit in New York and Michael Mina in San Francisco — prepared a six-course meal to show what he'd do with modern American.

“The moment I tasted the things he wanted to create here, I knew. I said, ‘This is it,’ ” Jones said.

These include a lovely charcuterie of meats and cheeses served on a block of Himalayan salt; a melt-in-your-mouth, crisp slab of pork belly with cider-braised cabbage and roasted pearl onions; a plate of delicate ravioli stuffed with butternut squash; a sublime filet of Meyer Ranch natural beef; asparagus and mushrooms topped with a poached egg.

Making sure that diners find the correct wine to pair with each dish is sommelier Ryan Tedder, who was hired away from Stephan Pyles in Dallas. At an early dinner recently, Tedder stopped by one table to chat with great animation about tannin-rich, unfiltered cabernets, syrahs and barolos that would go perfectly with that divine pork belly.

Alongside assistant sommelier Jenny Kornblum, who left a long career running the beloved Saprستي! in Fort Worth, Tedder oversees a 6,000-bottle cellar with plentiful California selections, as well as intriguing picks in cabernet francs and grenaches, which he predicts to be the next big things. The list, which Jones allowed Tedder to create from scratch, also includes up to 150 half-bottle choices. Tedder and Kornblum bring a youthful, rather giddy, spirit rarely seen in the sommelier role — and Tedder credits that to the Grace zeitgeist that Adam created.

“Adam just had this holistic experience I wanted, bringing such a balanced background in food, beverage and ambience together in one place. I couldn't resist it,” Tedder said.

Neither could the rest of the staff, more than half of whom have worked with Jones in previous jobs: Grace patrons will recognize familiar faces in executive sous-chef Martin Thompson, now with Adam for 20 years; private dining manager Lisa Brown, 12 years; and bartender Jason Miller, eight years. The overwhelming sentiment among staff and customers is that Grace will be a winner.

“Adam is the mayor of downtown Fort Worth,” said Gary Ray, former Stock Show Syndicate president and a longtime associate of Adam's at Del Frisco's. “He'll have plenty of success here.”



Chef Blaine Staniford

#### I WANT TO GO

##### Grace

777 Main St.  
Fort Worth  
817-877-3388  
www.gracefortworth.com  
Open for dinner  
Monday-Saturday.



Sommelier Ryan Tedder and assistant sommelier Jenny Kornblum oversee a 6,000-bottle cellar.