

## Dallas vs. Foreign Restaurants: Round One

They're coming from places such as New York, Las Vegas and Aspen. Nobu. Bice. Craft. BLT Steak. Kenichi. N9NE. Each is attempting to harvest riches by tilling the Metroplex's dry brown clay. And there will be blood in the water: theirs, ours, or more likely, both. "It's the Stephans and the Deans versus the famous people on TV," Mabel says. "One of the big changes that we've had over the last couple of years is we haven't had the chefs from out of town coming here at the high end, like they do in New York or in California or in Vegas or in Chicago. We haven't had a famous chef drop in out of the sky to open a Nobu or Craft." But they're here, and they're exerting seismic pressure on the local chef talent pool.

Not only does it seem difficult for Dallas-bred chefs to make noise on a national stage these days, they're having a hard time generating excitement on their home turf. The stand-alone restaurant governed by a local chef is suddenly beset by formidable culinary divisions from abroad, national names allied with hotel partners who not only foot part or all of the staging bills, they fill seats with guests from the 200-plus guest rooms upstairs.

Thus our culinary questions get ever more provincial: "Is Dean going to cannibalize Stephan?" asks Jeffery Yarbrough of Big Ink PR and Marketing. "Is Dean going to focus on the young and hip or the old and blue?"

Yet foreign star power may not be as formidable as it seems. Il Mulino New York was felled this year by pride suffused with arrogance. Rumors circulated over the summer that Nobuyuki Matsuhisa and company were itching to scrub Nobu's lease with the Crescent because monetary projections weren't being hit. Anecdotal evidence (including ours) suggested diners were fed up with staff arrogance. Lunch was scrubbed last summer.

"This is what we do in Dallas: We eat out and we shop," says Tracy Evers, executive director of the Greater Dallas Restaurant Association (GDRA). "We don't respond well to customer service that maybe works in other cities."

In Texas there is a simple rule called "southern hospitality." It is an unwritten rule used in not only in the restaurant business, but also in everyday life. Foreign restaurants seem to rely on their name and quality of food to carry them. Round one has begun.

FoodWise Group is ready to help any restaurant gear up for the upcoming food fight. Contact us at [www.foodwisegroup.com](http://www.foodwisegroup.com) for more information.

*Sources Include: Mark Stuert Dining; Reviews*