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Best in DFW: Desserts











Ben Torres/Special Contributor

Chocolate and hazelnut mille-feuille dessert from the Mansion Restaurant

By LESLIE BRENNER, Restaurant Critic

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For whatever reason, Dallas just does not seem to be attracting great pastry chefs at the moment. In fact, the D-FW area lost one of its best — David Collier of the Rosewood Mansion on [Turtle Creek](#) — last month, when he left for Washington, D.C.

Be that as it may, there are a number of chefs in

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GuideLive.com: Map of spots with the best desserts

the city turning out consistently outstanding desserts, from homey pies and exotic custards to the most formal mille-feuilles and dacquoises.

Perhaps surprisingly, only two of the restaurants on this list have official pastry chefs — the others count on the savory-side chefs to create their sweets.

In any case, what they're doing is hard to resist. That's a happy thought as Valentine's Day approaches, and we long to find the dreamiest sweets with which to tempt our sweethearts.

We're guessing there's a restaurant or two where you love to dive into something sweet, and naturally we'd love to hear about them. Please let us know in a comment below.

Here, in alphabetical order, are my picks for the best desserts in D-FW.

Craft Dallas

When Laurel Winberg took over the pastry-chef slot at Craft in 2009, I was less than wowed by her desserts. Since then, she has made serious strides, and now her pastries and ice creams — always inspired by the seasons — are simply glorious. (Chef de cuisine [Jeff Harris](#) recently left the restaurant; he plans to open his own place later this year.) With a focus on great fruit, the best chocolate, the freshest nuts, they're all about purity of flavor. A few months ago I was bowled over by her buttery huckleberry crisp, paired with a bright Meyer lemon ice cream. Her super-thick mocha pot de crème had a perfect texture and superb, deep flavor; she topped it with whipped cream and croutons fashioned from chocolate cake. Now that huckleberries are just a lovely memory, she's turned her attention to a red currant crème brûlée with semolina pine nut cookies — perfect for winter. What will spring and summer bring to Craft's dessert plates? We can only dream.

2240 Victory Park Lane (in the [W Hotel](#)), Dallas. 214-397-4111. www.craftrestaurant.com.

Lucia

I didn't expect to find great desserts at Lucia, the tiny Italian spot David and Jennifer Uygur opened in December in Oak Cliff's Bishop Arts District. Italian restaurants aren't exactly known for great pastries, and chef David is managing the sweets himself, sans pastry chef. But the dainties that follow Uygur's savory plates are quietly wonderful — a milk chocolate panna cotta with just the right wobbly softness, crowned with rich bittersweet chocolate budino (a thick custard), soft whipped cream, cocoa nibs and threads of candied orange peel. Or a homespun spice cake, impossibly moist and not too sweet, topped with butternut squash sorbetto. Want to talk cannoli? Uygur fills those delicate shells with sweet, house-made ricotta. Bene, bene, baby.

408 W. Eighth St., Dallas. 214-948-4998. www.luciadallas.com.

The Mansion Restaurant

Since David Collier left the Mansion, the desserts are not quite as spectacular as they were. But with executive chef [Bruno Davailon](#) in charge until Collier's replacement is found, the pastries are still impressive, with an aesthetic that's formal, refined and beautiful. To wit: "lemon," which layers subtly flavored lemon-verbena poundcake with fragile lemon meringue; Davailon pairs it with frozen lemon soufflé and a pretty drop of lemon curd. Or gorgeous variations on an apple theme. Still, it's hard to pass up the chocolate and hazelnut mille-feuille — thin layers of chocolate puff pastry filled with gianduja (chocolate-hazelnut) and caramel crèmeux piped between them and a fabulous hazelnut gelato on the side.

2821 Turtle Creek Blvd. (at the [Rosewood Mansion on Turtle Creek](#)), Dallas. 214-443-4747. www.mansiononturtlecreek.com.

Nosh

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Pastry chef Steve Noe does a terrific job with traditional French desserts at Nosh, the “Euro bistro” Avner Samuel opened last fall in his former Aurora space. I love Noe’s thickly apply, buttery tarte Tatin, a [symphony](#) of bright fruit, warm caramel and tender crust — with a scoop of house-made vanilla on top, bien sûr. There’s nothing fussy or formal about it, or any of Noe’s desserts; they have a kind of rustic elegance. As in his hazelnut financier, which has an almost brownielike texture. Chocoholics will swoon over Nosh’s super-rich, beautifully thick chocolate pot de crème.

4216 Oak Lawn Ave., Dallas. 214-528-9400. www.nosheurobistro.com.

Samar by Stephen Pyles

Chef Pyles created most of the desserts at Samar, and they stay true to the small-plates restaurant’s spice-route theme. Kissed with rose petals, cardamom, saffron or ginger, they all have romantically exotic allure. If you like Turkish coffee, you’ll love Samar’s velvety Turkish coffee pot de crème, served in a demitasse and topped with whipped cream. Tender croquetas filled with candied ginger that float in natilla, Spanish custard, are terrific, too. And I love the delicately flavored saffron-coconut rice pudding.

2100 Ross Ave., Dallas. 214-922-9922. www.samarrestaurant.com.

Tei-An

Given the fact that even in the best restaurants in Japan, dessert is usually nothing more than a great piece of fruit, it’s beyond surprising that a Japanese restaurant has some of the best desserts in Dallas. But one bite of chef Teiichi Sakurai’s silky green flan flavored with matcha, the intense powdered tea used in the Japanese tea ceremony, and you’re bound to be a believer. Even better is an ice cream based on soba (buckwheat), the restaurant’s raison d’être. Sakurai drizzles it with lightly bitter, almost black, house-made Kuromitsu “honey,” and the effect, in combination with that unusual ice cream, is absolutely lovely.

1722 Routh St. (in One Arts Plaza), Dallas. 214-220-2828. www.tei-an.com.

Whiskey Cake

Whiskey Cake doesn’t have a pastry chef, either; it’s chef de cuisine T.J. Lengnick who’s in charge of desserts. In fact, his family recipe gives the restaurant its name. The whiskey cake in question is a doozy of a boozy treat — a big slice of luscious toffee torte surrounded by whiskey-spiked crème anglaise. There’s only one other dessert on the menu: butterscotch crème brûlée with a candied bourbon top to shatter, but only after a server flambées it at the table. (Wheeee!) There’s also a different pie every few days; apple-cranberry and blood-orange curd have been my favorites. The one thing they all have going for them? A fine-yet-rustic-looking wonderful buttery crust.

3601 Dallas Parkway, Plano. 972-993-2253. www.whiskey-cake.com.

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I thick la Duni has the best desserts in town !
























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<p>Last week it was Tex-Mex was not a Dallas strength. This week, "Italian restaurants aren't exactly known for great pastries." Playpuck's post is right on target. I might add that many of the foundations of French/Classical pastry were originated in Italy. Is there no one left at the Dallas Morning News who can edit? How is so much ignorance ending up in print?</p>	
<p> playpuck Score: 0 8:09 PM on 2/13/2011</p> <p>Re: Lucia: Italian restaurants aren't exactly known for their great pastries? Seriously sweetheart? Maybe Italian restaurants in Dallas, come to think of it, you cant get great pastries anywhere in Dallas, let alone a restaurant. But in NY Italian Restaurants, where I am from, or in Italy, Dear Lord, pastries are amazing. Please make note you are a Dallas food critic and you are speaking of Dallas Italian restaurants. Geez</p>	<p>   Report Abuse</p>
<p> Jon From Tjs Score: 0 5:58 PM on 2/10/2011</p> <p>chocolate glob - parigis</p>	<p>   Report Abuse</p>
<p> Martin Score: 1 12:19 PM on 2/10/2011</p> <p>Couldn't agree more about Whiskey Cake. Their name-sake is fantastic.</p>	<p>   Report Abuse</p>
<p> Jhouse Score: 0 12:03 PM on 2/10/2011</p> <p>Ate both the Lemon and the chocolate and hazelnut mille-feuille last night at the Mansion. Both were awesome, but I wish I remembered them better ... too much wine preceded the dessert course.</p>	<p>   Report Abuse</p>
<p> MiF Score: 0 11:12 AM on 2/10/2011</p> <p>Has anyone else noticed La Duni's cakes to be dry? It may be a coincidence, but I have had more dry cakes than moist from La Duni.</p> <p> 2 replies</p>	<p>   Report Abuse</p>
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