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Bishop Arts' tiny Italian restaurant Lucia wows reviewers and patrons



Carter Rose/Special Contributor

The atmosphere is cozy at Lucia.

By JASON SHEELER, Staff Writer

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"Thank you for calling Lucia, this is Jennifer," answers the co-owner of the hottest restaurant in Dallas. "Oh ... yes ... when did you call us? Honestly, we've had more than 100 voicemails since yesterday. So I'm just not there yet."

One hundred voicemails in a single day? Yes, Jennifer and husband David Uygur's small Bishop Arts District Italian restaurant is that hot. Lucia bowed in mid-December — just in time to be named 2010's best new restaurant by *DMN* critic Leslie Brenner. Even before a single crispy lamb meatball was officially served, the online buzz was all hugs, thanks to chef David's eight years at Lola, participation in the 48 Nights pop-up restaurant and a series of preview tastings at Lucia's West Eighth Street location.

One month later, the reviews are still unanimously starry and most of the 36 seats booked 10 days out. (Saturday nights are even tougher.) Jennifer and David aren't exactly comfortable with all the hoo-hah. "We're not hype people," Jennifer stresses when asked if the universal love is sustainable. David looks

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up from a pork shoulder that's soon to experience reincarnation as thinly sliced coppa served on a wood board with other house-cured salumi. "I just want to cook with the best ingredients available locally, to make the kind of food you'd find in Italy and share it with our friends."

That food — seared beef tongue, handmade pastas, roasted duck breast, zabaglione custard with whipped egg yolk and Marsala wine — dominates the foodie conversation, but the restaurant's interior merits mention, too. The tin ceiling and transom windows were there when the Uygurs took over the former part-time yoga studio and THE magazine offices. Interior designer Donna Spillers subway-tiled the open kitchen, helped source the mismatched chairs and new-but-distressed tabletops, and turned benches lining both sides of the restaurant into rustic cupboards for tools, stationery, linens and paper goods.


From the outside, though, Lucia is simply a sexy, cozy restaurant that might be just off Perry Street in New York's West Village — with the same "reservations strongly recommended" policy.


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

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