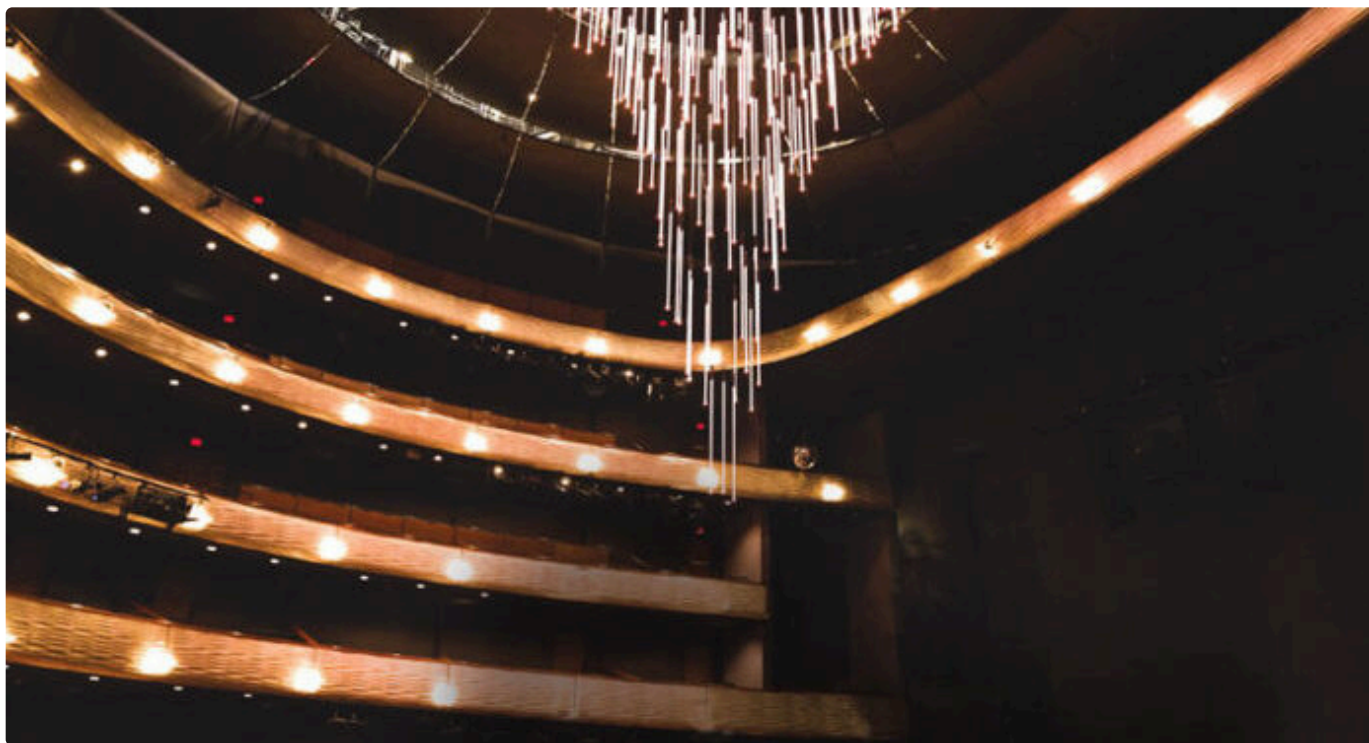


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# A Standing Ovation

by **Lisa Dawson** in [Arts+Entertainment](#)[Bookmark](#)

For lovers of the arts, there is nothing quite like the opera — the rich sounds of the symphony orchestra, ornate and colorful costumes and the stories that find us through beautiful singing voices that float through our memories forever. Some may be fortunate enough to spend entire seasons at The Dallas Opera, but, for most of us, a night at the opera is a very special occasion — an event that may be experienced only a few times in a lifetime, if at all.

The Dallas Opera has made a night at the opera much more attainable for those of us in Frisco. With its free simulcast of “Madame Butterfly” at The Star in Frisco on Saturday, March 18, we can all enjoy the beauty of an evening at the opera practically in our own backyard. No costly tickets, fighting traffic to get to downtown Dallas or even hiring a babysitter. This family-friendly performance is designed for all ages to enjoy.

This year’s simulcast performance is “Madame Butterfly,” a timeless story of young girl’s love for an American naval officer. “Madame Butterfly” first debuted on the stage in Milan in 1904, and to this day, still has a timeless appeal. This performance, simulcast live from the Winspear Opera House, is The Dallas Opera’s fifteenth free public simulcast. The program is nationally recognized and has attracted more than 70,000 patrons over the past five years. The Dallas Opera presents approximately 30 opera performances each year, including five mainstage productions and three family productions. The organization also presents around 90 educational programs each year in schools, libraries and community centers. Students from schools in Collin County, including Frisco, have visited the Winspear Opera House to see opera dress rehearsals.

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Keith Cerny, the CEO of the Dallas Opera and the Kern Wildenthal general director, says the popular simulcast program draws more and more people each year. This will be the very first simulcast performance at The Star. “The first time we held a simulcast performance was at AT&T Stadium. We presented Mozart’s fairy-tale opera ‘The Magic Flute,’ and it was a tremendous success. We drew approximately 15,000 people, and I will never forget the lengthy and enthusiastic standing ovation that came at the conclusion of the performance. Although I have seen countless opera productions during my life, seeing a live performance of an opera projected on one of the largest video screens in the world was thrilling. It was literally larger than life and was accompanied by an excellent sound system we rented that filled the 80,000-seat stadium. It was simply spectacular!”

“Madame Butterfly” is based on the short story by John Luther Long and was adapted into a performance by the famous Italian opera composer Giacomo Puccini. As a simple, three-act (originally two) performance, it is loosely based on true events in Nagasaki, Japan. It is a love story that tells the tale of a naïve Japanese girl, Cio-Cio-San, who is blinded by her love for a callous American naval officer, Lt. B.F. Pinkerton. “Madame Butterfly” is the third production of The Dallas Opera’s 60th season and is a classic period production, led by renowned Italian conductor Donato Renzetti. The winner of multiple international awards, Mr. Renzetti has achieved much critical acclaim from around the globe for his performances.

The simulcasts offer a casual setting to enjoy a unique arts and entertainment experience, complete with a spectacular high-definition broadcast screen and a high-quality sound system. The audience experience is similar to the opera house in that there is a shared emotional reaction to the operas. Audiences tend to sit in one place until the intermissions or the end, rather than moving around like they might do at a sports event. Depending on the location, people may bring food or drinks or purchase them at a concession stand. From a technical standpoint, many hours of pre-show work goes into each simulcast. The behind the scenes preparation requires Dallas Opera staff to work for months on these events, including dedicated volunteers to help support the performances.

For the performers, the experience is unique and exciting, as well. “I have noted that artists particularly relish knowing that their performances will be seen by a larger audience than in just the opera house. When we held our first simulcast of Mozart’s ‘Don Giovanni’ in Annette Strauss Artist Square, I invited the performers to take a second bow for the audience outside the Winspear Opera House, and they loved it!” says Mr. Cerny.

The simulcast program has received rave reviews from opera-goers. Mr. Cerny says, depending on the level of financial support available, they present between one and three simulcasts each season. Since 2010, The Dallas Opera has presented 14 simulcasts and each simulcast may be transmitted to more than one location. In November 2016, a performance of “Moby-Dick” was shown at both Klyde Warren Park in downtown Dallas and in Wichita Falls at the Kay Yeager Coliseum. The 2014 simulcast of Tod Machover’s robot opera “Death and the Powers” was shown at nine locations in the U.S. and Europe, and required three separate satellites. “Over the life of the program, more than 70,000 people have attended these free public performances. While most of the audiences have been drawn from North Texas, the company has also simulcast to London, New York, Stockholm, Boston, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Stanford University and Los Angeles. Closer to home, we have also



Although The Dallas Opera did not invent the simulcast program, it is one of the most active opera companies in the U.S. to utilize this technology to bring operas to a wider audience. “We have been one of the most active companies in this area. We know that other opera companies have taken notice of our efforts and, perhaps, have emulated some of our model. The idea of building community support by investing in performances outside the ‘four walls’ of the opera house is increasingly seen as best practice in the opera field,” says Mr. Cerny.

For The Star, this is just one of the many events to come throughout this year. “We are excited to host our yearly opera simulcast at The Star in Frisco this year,” said Chad Estis, the Dallas Cowboys executive vice president of business operations. “Shown on the outdoor 2,270-square-foot video board, this simulcast will give attendees an intimate experience, while maintaining a casual park-like setting.”

The simulcast will be held on Saturday, March 18, at The Star, the world headquarters of the Dallas Cowboys. The program begins at 6:30 p.m. with KLUV Radio’s host, Jody Dean, and The Dallas Opera’s education program senior manager, Kristian Roberts. The opera performance begins at 7:30 p.m. Activities include a Family Fun Zone from 4:30-6:30 p.m., a Pre-Performance Workshop at 5 p.m., contests and behind the scenes interviews. Parking is free. For tickets, go to [dallasopera.org/simulcast](https://dallasopera.org/simulcast). Visit The Dallas Opera website at [dallasopera.org](https://dallasopera.org) or call 214.443.1000 for additional event information. For those who wish to experience this at the Winspear Opera House, mainstage performances take place March 10, 12, 15, 18, 24 and 26.

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# Progressively Frisco

by **Allie Spletter** in Open

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Where should we go for dinner tonight?” It is the age-old question that most couples, friends and families grapple over as they work to find a restaurant and dining experience that fits the likes of all parties involved. Isn’t it strange how, oftentimes, our minds wander outside the realms of our hometown in hopes of going somewhere “different?” We want to go somewhere we have not been before and experience cuisine that is new, exciting, and most of all, flavorful. Every one of those characteristics is present at locations right under our noses here in our very own Frisco! It is safe to say that as Frisco grows, so does its culinary scene!

On a mission to explore our vast city, my husband, Zach, and I decided one Saturday afternoon that we wanted to try something we had never experienced before. We had a date night that allowed us to hit a few local spots we had never been to. We took the idea of a progressive dinner, which is where all the different courses of a meal are eaten at different people’s houses, and revamped it so our different courses happened at various restaurants in Frisco! The best part of a personalized progressive dinner is that you get to decide how many courses you include! Zach



ready for a night of exploration, delicious food, great atmospheres and new experiences!

## The Roots – Drinks

The first stop of our adventure landed us in one of my favorite areas of town, Frisco Square. The Roots bar is where we chose to begin our progressive dinner date night over cocktails and it did not disappoint, as it gave us a laid-back, comfortable and almost homey feeling place to enjoy a starter drink. The interior of the restaurant is open with great architecture



and offered a warm and inviting atmosphere that paid homage to owners Steven and Megan Turner's mission to take patrons back to the memories of home and their roots. The space offers seating at the bar, as well as a few different seating areas that feature comfy leather couches, cushioned seats, bar top tables and four-top tables. Local artists' work adorned the walls.

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There is a great specialty cocktail menu that offers beer, liquor and light snacks, which they have dubbed “tie overs.” The cordial bartender greeted us as we perused the menu looking for the perfect libation. He told us about a couple of their popular specialty cocktails, which included the Cayman Lemonade and the Montana Bear. To kick-start the night, I opted for the Cayman Lemonade, which features vodka, triple sec, peach schnapps, cranberry juice and club soda. After the first sip, I was immediately transported to the Cayman Islands! The drink was light, refreshing and had the perfect amount of both sweet and tart to please the palette. The club soda gave it great carbonation and its light, almost clear, pink color even made it refreshing to look at! Zach opted for a classic Moscow Mule, made with vodka, ginger beer and lime juice, which he said was made perfectly, as the bite of the ginger beer and the tartness of the lime made the classic drink as cool and smooth as it always has been. The Roots bar features live music during the week and is a great place to enjoy a drink before going out on the town. Take time to hang out, listen to good music and enjoy the atmosphere.

## Pizzeria Testa – Appetizers

Having finished our drinks, we were looking to answer the call of our empty stomachs, and we knew Pizzeria Testa was just down the way from The Roots bar. We have wanted to try it for a while, as many friends have raved about its authentic Italian flavors and the industrial/modern atmosphere it offers. The restaurant features two patios, one in the front of the restaurant and one in the back, overlooking Simpson Plaza in front of Frisco City Hall.





Inside, there are beautiful exposed brick walls and exposed beam ceilings. The kitchen is exposed so patrons can see the chefs preparing food and the 7,000-pound handmade-in-Italy Neapolitan pizza ovens are a sight to behold. They are essentially the centerpiece of both the restaurant and the menu. With imported ingredients that give dishes a depth of flavor few restaurants are able to achieve, we were hard-pressed to keep our eyes only on the appetizer section of the menu!

The appetizer selection is full of Italian classics and favorites offering everything from classic Caprese to the All Italiana, a meat, cheese, olive and bread plate. Our server admitted that we could not go wrong with anything chosen from the menu. Having been told Pizzeria Testa's tomatoes were divine, we ultimately decided we wanted to taste those San Marzano tomatoes (grown in and imported from Italy) and ordered the Bruschetta Michele and the Rosette Cotto. The Bruschetta Michele was presented beautifully with four large pieces of wood, oven-toasted bread covered with diced tomatoes, oregano, basil and extra virgin olive oil. The tomato flavor was not overpowering, as the oregano, basil and EVOO all married together beautifully to create subtle, yet phenomenal, flavors. The outside crust of the bread was crunchy from the oven, while the middle remained fluffy and light, as it soaked in the flavors of the tomatoes. As the Bruschetta Michele was delivered to the table, another waiter was close behind with the Rosette Cotto, which is, in essence, a version of a pizza roll. The dish offers six large bite-sized pieces of prosciutto cotto (an Italian-style ham) rolled up in a light, wood-fire-baked dough with smoked mozzarella, Fontina and Parmigiano cheeses and basil, served with a tomato dipping sauce. The velvety cheese, the crunch of the wood-fired bread, the saltiness of the prosciutto and the essence of the basil all came together to make fantastic bites filled with texture and exceptional flavor. Within the various flavors, owner Rod Schaefer pays homage to both his family and his mother's home country of Italy. Although we had probably hit our carbohydrate quota for the day, we were ready to head out for a great soup and salad for our next course!

## Silver Fox – Soup and Salad

Though the star of a meal is usually the entrée, both Zach and I will tell you, we love a great salad and cup of soup, which is why we headed down to the southwest edge of Frisco to Silver Fox to try out some of the popular soups and salads. Upon entering Silver Fox, diners are immediately enveloped into an upscale, modern, yet classic, romantically sophisticated atmosphere that invites guests to indulge. Though it was late afternoon/early evening on a Saturday, we went ahead and reserved a table and were seated promptly in the restaurant's gorgeous half-moon bar area that has booth seating and tables. The mahogany finishes and marble floors throughout the restaurant added to the elegant ambiance.



After being greeted with warm bread, butter and a small dish of pickles, we perused the cocktail menu that features seasonal selections, cocktails and wines, and I tried The Jasmine that is comprised of Grey Goose vodka, Solerno Blood Orange Liqueur, rose water syrup and fresh lemon juice. Zach, ever the consistent and classic one, went for a Titos and Sprite. Our waiter was excited to hear about our dining adventure as he had never heard of a progressive dinner, and he was intrigued that we were stopping in for soup and salad. He had fantastic suggestions,



exactly why the Ill Forks salad is award-winning, given the flavors achieved in the dish without any overpowering the other. Field greens, crisp apple slices, pecans and a blue cheese crumble are paired with a sweet, tangy vinaigrette. Each bite offers texture and flavors that complement each other and come together to make a light, flavor-filled salad. I had never had lobster bisque (blasphemy, right?) so I was interested to see how it would taste. It ended up being one of the most velvety, creamy, luxuriously rich soups I have had, as it offered chunks of lobster that only added to the richness of the dish. I will admit that I cannot wait to have this soup again! Zach's Silver Fox salad was exactly what he had hoped for, as it was more of Silver Fox's signature version of a house salad with iceberg and romaine lettuce, tomatoes, hard-boiled egg, red onion and bacon. He was highly-impressed with the French Onion soup, as the broth-like dish had a rich depth of flavor, without making the onion too strong. It was served with a thick layer of melted cheese that he had to pierce to get to the soup.

## TruFire Kitchen and Bar - Entrees

We headed out to our next destination excited, as it was one we had wanted to try since we moved to Frisco. TruFire Kitchen and Bar is nestled on the southwest corner of the Dallas North Tollway and Lebanon Road by other restaurants and retail spaces. We had heard phenomenal things about TruFire, a self-professed progressive American concept restaurant with Mediterranean and Italian dishes, as well as some meals inspired by areas around the globe. When we arrived, the dining room was bustling with large groups, families and couples on dates, and the ambiance of the restaurant invited all to relax and enjoy great drinks and food. Though the color palette is mostly dark wood tones and neutrals, there are unique patterns and textures throughout the restaurant, my favorite being a gorgeous herringbone wood pattern wall in the bar area. The dining room is open and inviting with a casual and socially energetic and upbeat atmosphere, while the bar area offers high-top tables and gorgeous leather bar stools. We were told TruFire had great wine, so we decided that we wanted to try a couple of their selections from the extensive wine list. I went with the Dr. Loosen Riesling, which was bright, crisp and delivered a great balance of sweet and tart, and Zach chose the Guenoc Petite Syrah Reserve that boasted a full-bodied, rich flavor.



Our waiter was as attentive, knowledgeable and as helpful as they come, and he was a wonderful help at suggesting various dishes throughout the menu for our entrée options. The menu has a great mix of dishes including everything from pizza and specialty meals to sandwich and pasta sections. Choosing which we wanted to try was no small feat! Though not an entrée, the waiter noted that one of their signature salads, the Naked Avocado, is one of their most popular, along with the Spicy Garlic Noodle Dish, the Bucatini Carbonara and their Latin Fire Pizza. I decided to try the Smoked Meatball Pasta, and Zach, my pizza lover, decided on a classic Four Cheese Pizza with pepperoni. The Smoked Meatball Pasta was presented beautifully with a sunny side up egg resting atop a mountain of Applewood smoked bacon, Romano and parmesan cheese, white wine, fresh herbs, infused olive oil, smoked tomato sauce, linguine and four large house meatballs. It was one of those dishes you can eat on for the duration of the meal and it still ends up looking like you hardly touched it. The smoked tomato sauce and the blend of cheeses made the dish fabulously rich, but not too heavy. The flavor of the meatballs only added to the pasta, which was cooked perfectly. The egg atop it all, after the yolk was pierced and mixed into the pasta, sauce and meatball, leveled the whole dish out. Zach's pizza came out piping hot and he was in heaven. The made-fresh-daily crust was thin and the pepperoni was abundant, complementing the blend of the mozzarella, provolone, muenster and aged white cheddar cheeses. He could have eaten the entire pizza, had we not planned on making more stops. Regardless of what you choose, TruFire will ignite your culinary flame, as it encourages patrons to try new and innovative dishes.

## Nervvana Coffee + Shop – Coffee

With full bellies and the onset of food comas imminent, we wanted to enjoy a coffee together, to give us a little pep in our step, to finish the night strong. After all, we still had the dessert course to explore! In search of a great warm drink or cup of coffee, we immediately chose one of Frisco's newest and most popular coffee shops, Nervvana Coffee + Shop, to keep our night going. Nestled on the first floor of Frisco Square's newest office building,





Nerdvana shares walls with its sister restaurant Nerdvana Food + Spirits (that is on the docket for our next progressive dinner). Though it was later in the evening, the coffee shop was still bustling with students studying, groups conducting meetings and couples and friends enjoying card and board games. There are plenty of great seating choices including bar seating and tables lined with carts of games towards the back of the space. Modern décor with industrial touches created a clean, creative and upbeat atmosphere.

The handwritten menu rests high above the coffee kitchen and offers both hot and iced coffee selections, tea, drinking chocolate, juices and bottled drinks. The menu also offers pastries, soups, salads and snacks. The barista informed us their Vanilla Latte is one of their more popular selections, simply due to the familiarity of the drink in relation to other coffee shops, and she also suggested their Cortado as it offers rich, bold flavors. I ran straight out of my coffee comfort zone and decided to try a Matcha Latte, and Zach went for the Cortado. After we placed our order, the barista let us know that the drinks would be ready down at the end of the counter. As we waited, we scoped out a place to sit and decided on a great little decorative table that plays into their gaming theme. The table had a recessed chess game with a thick layer of glass over it, which I appreciated as a clever, creative and functional piece that added to the atmosphere. The large space also has a section of games and collectables for sale. When our orders were ready, my bright green Matcha Latte was served in a cute red mug with a saucer that made it pleasing to the eye. The Cortado was presented in what could be described as a large, wide shot glass on a small, wooden platter. The Cortado is essentially an espresso with a bit of milk to help reduce the acidity. We were both really happy with our choices!

## Eight 11 Place – Dessert

Next, we headed east down Main Street to Frisco's historic and charming downtown area, ready to see what Eight 11 Place had to offer in the realm of all things sweet. We were



interested and excited to see how the place had changed since it recently changed owners. We parked in the back in their small parking lot and made our way around to the front of the small, unique house-turned-restaurant. As we walked, we saw patrons relaxed around fire-pit tables. We entered the front door and were warmly greeted by the hostess who giggled as I immediately, and a bit too excitedly, asked her if we could be seated in the back at a fire-pit table. She happily obliged and led us through the quaint dining room out to the back of the restaurant. The back patio/yard is something out of Southern Living Magazine. It is spacious, with a number of fire-pit tables that seat four, standing heaters to keep patrons warm and a few bar top tables made out of large barrels. Patrons can even choose to sit at the bar located just outside the back door. Other diners were scattered throughout the space enjoying drinks, various food dishes and roasting s'mores over their personal fire-pits (be still my East Texas country heart). Strands of vintage-inspired lights spanned from the restaurant to the back of the space, creating even more of a magical ambiance for patrons to enjoy.

Our waiter was full of warm and inviting personality. He lit the fire-pit, which gave off a great amount of heat to cut through the chill in the air. They have got an updated menu that offers shareables, pizzas, flatbreads, salads, paninis and desserts. Of course, my sweet tooth eyes



darted straight for the desserts and it did not take Zach and I long to decide on the Fireside S'Mores Board and the Triple Layer Chocolate Cake. They also offer a dulce de leche and hot chocolate cake. Our waiter brought out the Fireside S'mores presented as a deconstructed s'more on a large wooden platter, along with two long, wooden skewers for roasting marshmallows. He sat them on the ledge of the table with the chocolate squares near the fire so it would begin to get warm and melty. He also brought out the Triple Layer Chocolate Cake that looked divine. The cake was rich and decadent with crushed candied pecans sprinkled atop that gave it a perfect little touch of texture. The s'mores were that age-old, classic blend of velvety, roasted marshmallow, melted chocolate and crisp graham cracker. It seems like the simplest thing, but we had so much fun just sitting, talking and enjoying the fire, s'mores, cake and each other's company in an incredible little setting. I could have stayed there all night. Our waiter offered us blankets for our laps to keep warm, which we gladly accepted. This is one place I truly cannot wait to go back to and it is a must-try if you are looking for a new date night spot.

## En Fuego Tobacco Shop – Cigars/Nightcap

We ended the night by visiting En Fuego Tobacco Shop, Frisco's popular cigar shop and hang out. Though we are not cigar smokers, we were interested to peruse the shop that was opened and designed to give guys a cool lounge where they could go hang out, watch a ball game and share their passion for cigars. The shop is a beautifully-adorned space with warm, neutral tones throughout. There are tables, a bar and even a comfortable area with leather chairs near the fireplace. Televisions are on throughout the space. The shop boasts a large



humidor with a wide variety of cigars for patrons to choose from and a knowledgeable, patient and helpful staff that is ready to answer questions and help make a great selection. FYI, the shop is BYOB.

En Fuego carries most major brands of premium cigars and a large selection of boutique, hard-to-find and special release brands of cigars. En Fuego shops are authorized dealers of Padron Cigars, Fuente Fuente Opus X and Liga Privada by Drew Estate. The shop's selection continually changes, adding and removing brands, as the proprietors work tirelessly to offer customers the very best the market has to offer. Though we did not partake in a cigar, we enjoyed learning more and soaking in the atmosphere at the end of the night!

Dinner "out" does not always have to mean heading outside the lovely confines of our beautifully booming city. Our date night progressive dinner adventure around Frisco opened our eyes to the wide variety of exciting and unique restaurants that are proud to call Frisco home. Whether you are dining with your significant other, your family or friends, there are not many places you can go wrong here. It is time to step outside the norm and really discover, indulge and enjoy!

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