

# Service *with a* Smile

By Meda Kessler Photo by Jill Johnson

**D**oug White just knows it's been that kind of day. When we order wine, he knowingly asks, "The entire bottle, I presume?" Good man.

Along with the Scott Farm tomatoes and complimentary dessert cookies, Doug is one of our favorite things about Ellerbe Fine Foods (his faithful fans, of course, ask for him by name). Along with Justin Roper and Andrew Hancock, Doug is one of three original servers who have been with chef Molly McCook and general manager Richard King at Ellerbe Fine Foods since it helped lead the charge in turning Fort Worth's Near Southside into a diner's paradise three years ago. While Doug worked for a time at Sapristi! Bistro and Wine Bar in Fort Worth, he answered a Craigslist ad in 2009 looking for servers for a new restaurant.

Many of Doug's fans know him from their days at Paschal and All Saints' high schools: "These crazy people have been following me around town forever," he says with a broad smile.

While we knew Doug was an accomplished freelance makeup artist and a former MAC Cosmetics trainer in Atlanta, what we didn't know was his passion for music. He's a self-taught organ player, with a keyboard obsession that began in high school, continued during his time at Texas Wesleyan and remains today; he sleuths out sheet music, practices when he can and professes his love of Bach and Mozart. "The organ at St. John's Episcopal Church is like an old friend," he says, plus he plays at his Fairmount home on "Henrietta the Hammond," a 1950s model.

And while he dabbles in the kitchen — he's taken cooking classes from McCook at Central Market, once as a gift with and from a table of regulars — he tends to frequent and support his Southside neighborhood by hitting up Benito's, Temaki Sushi and Shaw's.

He enjoys basking in the continued popularity of Ellerbe,



seeing more customers coming west from Dallas along with ongoing national media coverage. "I had no earthly idea this place would be this successful. It's been a fun, crazy ride. And Molly and Richard have taught me a lot about food and wine. I was a meat-and-potatoes kind of guy, but now I like veggies, because they *taste* like veggies," says Doug. While he admits it's a demanding job because of the owners' high standards, there's a good vibe inside the converted gas station on Magnolia Avenue. "It's definitely a friends-and-family feel here."

#### THE DETAILS

**Ellerbe Fine Foods**  
1501 W. Magnolia  
Ave., Fort Worth;  
817-926-3663 or  
ellerbefinefoods.com.