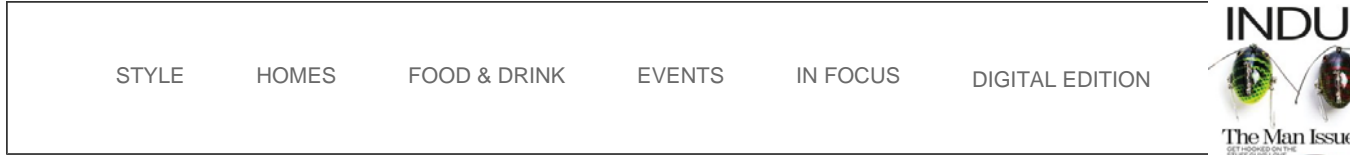


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Texas Toast Culinary Tours Take Foodies on Delicious Jaunts

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By JUDY WILEY Photos by Richard W. Rodriguez

From artisanal cheese makers to the latest inspired chef's new eatery, there's so much for foodies to see, do and taste these days, it's hard to know where to start. That's where Texas Toast Culinary Tours comes in.

Co-owners June Naylor and Cynthia Wahl are food-world insiders. Tour groups aren't just pointed in a direction and fed -- they're treated to a behind-the-culinary-scenes experience, complete with food, wine and the chance to meet and interact with the chefs, the sommeliers and the owners.



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As a longtime food critic and the author of two Texas cookbooks -- with a third on the way -- Naylor can spot a trend a mile away. When she saw culinary tours taking off in other parts of the country, she started planning the business here. Wahl, a longtime foodie and former art director at the Star-Telegram, manages the business end and handles Web design and other aesthetic work. Together they launched Texas Toast last September.

Upcoming Tours

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Upcoming Tours

June: A Feeding Frenzy in Fort Worth on June 22 will hit

Buttons for appetizers, Brix for the second course and finish with dessert at Bistro Louise.

July: On July 20, a Feeding Frenzy will head to Roanoke to visit Classic Cafe among other stops.

August and beyond:

A Feeding Frenzy (date TBA) will highlight eateries along West Seventh Street, and there will be a barbecue tour to the Austin area on Aug. 6-7. The next Marfa culinary tour is scheduled for October 28-31.

The company offers a variety of tours as well as team-building and corporate events. One of the most popular tours is the "Feeding Frenzy," an evening excursion designed to showcase what's hot. Diners sample three courses at three restaurants related by proximity or cuisine.

On a spring night in Fort Worth, for example, the "March Along Magnolia" included warm brie with plum sauce at Cat City Grill; a pecan-dusted flounder fillet at Ellerbe Fine Foods; and pies, cakes and a special lime meringue tart made just for the tour at Lili's Bistro.

Day trips and longer out-of-town tours delve deeper into a food scene, with stops at markets and artisanal shops. For example, last month's day trip to Dallas included artisanal cheese at Scardello; brunch at Smoke, the restaurant at the über-cool Belmont Inn in Oak Cliff; a jaunt to the Dallas Farmers Market; and a finale at Chocolate Secrets (the sign promises wine, chocolate and bliss).

Depending on the type of tour, diners may walk from place to place, caravan in their own vehicles or let Texas Toast do the driving. Naylor says they'll charter a vehicle for groups of 20 or more.

A portion of the per-head price for each Feeding Frenzy is donated to a food-related cause. "We're getting to eat really well, and we want to remember people who [don't have anything to] eat," says Naylor.

Road trips have explored Texas barbecue, Austin dining and the remarkably sophisticated culinary and art scene in Marfa. That trip, in mid-May, also included time at Big Bend National Park, with its stunning, steep canyons and blue, layered vistas.

The summer is full of tours, and Texas Toast is already looking ahead to fall and to the Super Bowl, when it will treat a group of corporate wives to a food-and-wine smackdown. There will also be a mixologist on hand at that event to teach specialty drink-making.

"They go to all the Super Bowls and really wanted something fun, different and delicious -- and we'll deliver that in spades," says Naylor. "We divide the group into teams and match the teams with a noted chef in town; the chef coaches them, and it's a hoot."

To book a tour or learn more, visit www.texastoculinarytours.com or call June Naylor at 817-239-1634 or Cynthia Wahl at 817-228-5220.

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