



The swimming pool at Joe T. Garcia's restaurant on Fort Worth's north side is one of the more popular outdoor features. A recent facelift, including a large fountain in the center of the pool, enhances the tropical feel.

OUTANDABOUT

# Primo Patios

BY TIFFANY FIGUEIREDO PHOTOS BY RALPH LAUER

After a gray winter and soggy spring, everyone wants to be outdoors — even while eating. Forget picnic baskets and playgrounds and head someplace where the drinks are cold, the vibe is cool, the food is hot and the dirt won't swallow your strappy summer stilettos. Here are our favorite places to nosh and imbibe outside.



Carved stone lion heads topped with flower-filled planters line the pool at Joe T.'s.

**Glass Cactus at Gaylord Texan Resort**  
1501 Gaylord Trail, Grapevine  
817-778-2800; [www.glasscactusnightclub.com](http://www.glasscactusnightclub.com)

**The scene:** This \$16 million nightclub at Grapevine's Gaylord Texan Resort is one of the Metroplex's hidden gems. A destination in its own right, the massive two-story club has five bars, a dance floor, a stage to accommodate live acts and a VIP lounge, yet it somehow remains inviting. The 13,000-square-foot, multilevel outdoor decks overlooking Lake Grapevine have their own seating areas and bar and offer a quiet respite from the action inside. Streaming video of the stage assures that no one misses the show. Our favorite thing about Glass Cactus is the crowd: You won't find a more diverse or better



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Food competes with a sunset view of Lake Grapevine at the Glass Cactus. A mini Kobe beef burger, left, is among the menu offerings. Above, enjoy an order of crab cakes on the multi-level deck filled with all-weather wicker furniture plumped with comfy cushions.



## OUT AND ABOUT

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A mixed appetizer plate, including the signature tamales, is among the most popular noshes at Reata. Western detailing includes the barbed-wire-style metal candleholders and the star motif found on the bar stools.

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dressed group anywhere.

**Best bites:** Chef Ty Thoren's creative club cuisine is no ordinary bar food. Try the addictive potato puffs with Maytag blue cheese; the grilled tenderloin flatbread pizza with caramelized onions, arugula, smoked Dallas mozzarella and balsamic drizzle; the miniature Black Angus burgers with jalapeno bacon; or the Gulf Coast lump crab cakes with roasted corn relish, fried leeks and tomatillo gazpacho.

**Thirst quenchers:** With the largest selection of tequila in the state to choose from, the bartenders here turn out killer margaritas. Try the prickly pear version for something different or choose a well drink from the full bar.

**When to go:** Start at sunset, when the view of Lake Grapevine is at its most beautiful, but stick around for the entertainment, particularly if Le Freak is playing, because nothing is more fun than watching people who can really get down (other than those who think they can).



**Joe T. Garcia's**  
2201 N. Commerce St.,  
Fort Worth  
817-626-4356;  
[www.joets.com](http://www.joets.com)

**The scene:** Looking more like a traditional Mexican hacienda than a restaurant, Joe T. Garcia's can seat more than 1,000 diners on its lushly landscaped patios, but it never feels like some massive chain operation. Intimate areas set off by natural stone, gurgling fountains and tropical flowers and greenery offer an oasis just minutes from

downtown. The famous pool has been updated with the addition of a fountain, a raised coping and even more lush plantings. For more than 70 years, the casual eatery has attracted all kinds of people, from families to TCU kids to singles looking to see and be seen to large parties celebrating everything from quinceañeras to corporate successes. Wear your prettiest sundress or most ancient shorts and flip-flops;

it all works.

**Best bites:** Everyone loves Joe T.'s two dinner offerings, the family-style enchilada dinner and the fajitas, but we prefer the weekend brunch menu of traditional huevos a la Mexicana, chili-quiles, huevos rancheros and migas all served with Mexican-style potatoes and refried beans or the ultimate hangover cure, menudo.

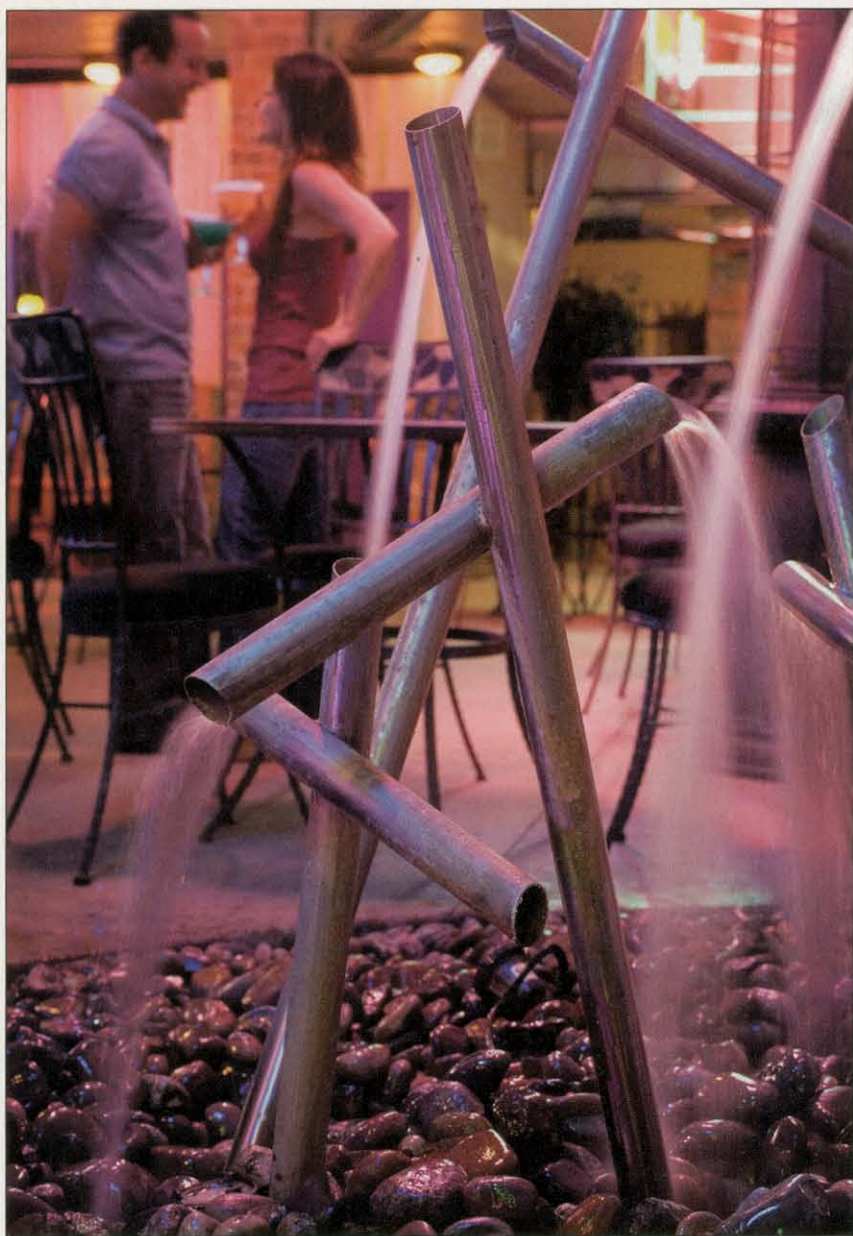
**Thirst quenchers:** If the potent and delicious margaritas don't tempt, a variety of imported Mexican beers perfectly complement Joe T.'s fiery salsa.

**When to go:** Sleep in on a sunny Saturday or Sunday morning and get to the restaurant just before it opens at 11 a.m. for a leisurely brunch. Joe T.'s takes



Reata's rooftop deck, landscaped with cacti and native plants, offers the best view of Fort Worth's skyline.





Chris Shule, left, and Helen Lawson enjoy a drink on Cafe Aspen's patio (a pipe fountain offers atmosphere and a bit of a cooling mist). David Rottman has turned a parking-lot space into one of the most popular scenes in Fort Worth.



neither credit cards nor reservations for parties fewer than 20, but if you find yourself standing in line, know that it'll be worth the wait.

### Cafe Aspen

6103 Camp Bowie Blvd., Fort Worth  
817-738-0838; [www.cafeaspen.com](http://www.cafeaspen.com)

**The scene:** It is amazing what a little imagination will do for a strip-mall parking lot. Situated in what was once a parking area behind the main restaurant and lounge, Cafe Aspen's patio is an inviting covered and enclosed space featuring a long brick bar, tile-topped tables and a noise-diffusing water fountain. The

crowd includes the restaurant's west-side regulars, young singles meeting for happy hour and groups of 30- and 40-something women enjoying girls' night out.

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**Best bites:** Classic bar fare such as chicken wings, burgers, quesadillas and potato skins get the gourmet treatment here, but we like the patio's Mediterranean- and Southwestern-influenced specialties, such as the grilled romaine salad with sun-dried tomato relish; the creamy spinach and artichoke-heart dip; the Southwestern crab cake with lime remoulade and chipotle sauce; and the decadent chicken-fried lobster fingers. If you ask nicely, someone might sell you a piece of to-die-for buttermilk fudge cake from the restaurant's dessert table.



A mojito and a pomegranate martini are two of the signature drinks at Lanny's, where sheer curtains and an open arbor help create an intimate atmosphere on the patio.

**Thirst quenchers:** A full bar turns out classic cocktails and specialty martinis, while a well-rounded list of full-bottle-worthy wines (many of which also are sold by the glass) will please lovers of the grape.

**When to go:** Cafe Aspen's casual patio is a perfect place to unwind after work with a group of friends. Happy hour is 4-7 p.m., with wallet-friendly, yet quality, \$4 house wines.

### Brio Tuscan Grille

1431 Plaza Place, Southlake  
817-310-3136; [www.brioitalian.com](http://www.brioitalian.com)

**The scene:** This concept restaurant chain has locations in 10 states, most in upscale shopping centers, such as this one in Southlake Town Square. The restaurant heavily plays up its Tuscan villa theme with warm Venetian plaster walls, arched doorways and Italian mosaics, but it never comes across as kitschy. The open-air patio, set in a spacious square surrounded by retail shops, features a large bar with seating, a number of tables and billowing white curtains to help block the sun. By day, it is filled with business people and lots of stroller-pushing moms grabbing lunch. By night the setting seems more intimate, making it a great choice for

groups of friends or couples.

**Best bites:** Brio features an extensive menu of simply pre-



A water feature in a narrow, low wall separates the upper and lower levels of the outdoor patio at Lanny's in Fort Worth.





pared Italian dishes, including soups, salads, pizzas, pastas and sandwiches. The stars of the menu are the grilled items — particularly the sliced tenderloin steak seasoned Tuscan style with rosemary and olive oil, and the gorgonzola-crust-ed lamb chops. The weekend brunch menu features a hand-ful of choices, including an angel-hair frittata and French toast with mascarpone cheese and berries.

**Thirst quenchers:** A nice selection of Italian wines is available, as are respectable wines from other locales, but we can't resist starting with the prosecco-and-peach-based bel- lini and finishing with a neat glass of ice cold limoncello.

**When to go:** Shopping at Southlake Town Square can get pretty hot during the summer. Stop into Brio for a light lunch and cool drink on the shady patio.

### Lanny's Alta Cocina Mexicana

3405 W. Seventh St., Fort Worth  
817-850-9996; www.lannyskitchen.com

**The scene:** The clean lines and subdued color scheme of this urbane west-side eatery extend onto the covered side patio. White table- cloths are set off by dark woven chairs and rustling beige shades that deflect the sun. If not for the traffic whiz- zing by on West Sev- enth Street, it could be the back patio of some chic expatriate's San Miguel home. In- stead, it is the brain- child of Cu- linary In- stitute- trained chef

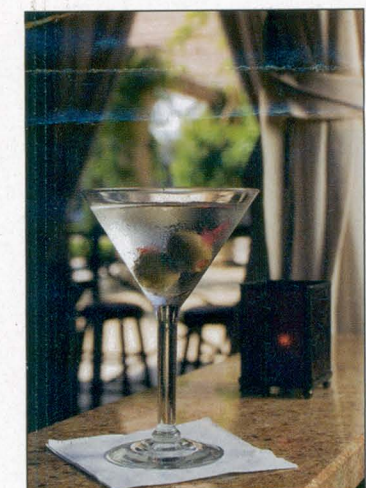


A fountain sits center stage on Brio's outdoor patio, and market umbrellas help create shade.

Lanny Lancarte, great-grandson of Joe T. Garcia, who, argu- ably, created the granddaddy of all fabulous Fort Worth patios.

**Best bites:** Dinner here is creative and inventive, but during these warm months, we love to sit under the stars and nibble on Lanny's Mexican take on Spanish tapas. Small plates of quail medallions in Parmesan

and cilantro broth, lobster ceviche with blood orange brûlée and Huitlacoche tamales with sweet corn mash fill our need for gour- met fare with- out weighing us down. Fol- low up with an order of warm cinna- mon-and- sugar-coated churros dipped in warm cajeta, and it's a per- fect summer night.



In the bar area of Brio, narrow granite ledges offer additional counter space.

perfect summer night.

**Thirst quenchers:** Lanny's boasts a deep and interesting wine list with a spotlight on Latin American bottles. For those who want a little more kick, a pomegranate margarita or coconut or tamarind mojito should do. The house-made sangria is tasty as well.

**When to go:** Save the patio for a late-eve- ning dinner when things have cooled off a bit. It's the type of place that invites a long, leisurely meal with great conversation, so bring people you enjoy being with.

### Duce

6333 Camp Bowie Blvd., Fort Worth  
817-377-4400; www.eatdrinkliveduce.com

**The scene:** Like most newish restaurants, chef Tim Love's Duce has been through a few changes in the quest to figure out what the dining public wants. The menu, save for a handful of favorites, has been revamped and new ideas designed to bring in custom- ers are introduced regularly. One thing that remains constant is the lure of Duce's chic patio. The sleek, hip space, featuring curving banquettes, stainless steel tables and chairs, stained concrete floors and a fireplace, at- tracts beautiful people of all ages at all hours of the day and night.

**Best bites:** Steaks are given star treatment on the menu, but it is hard to resist the center-cut pork chop with apple-Cheddar tart; the lamb chop, braised lamb shank and lamb empanada dish; or the wild salmon skewer served on yucca hash with papaya salsa. Then again, we could make a meal of Love's gnudi with sage brown butter appetizer — it's comfort food raised to haute cuisine heights.

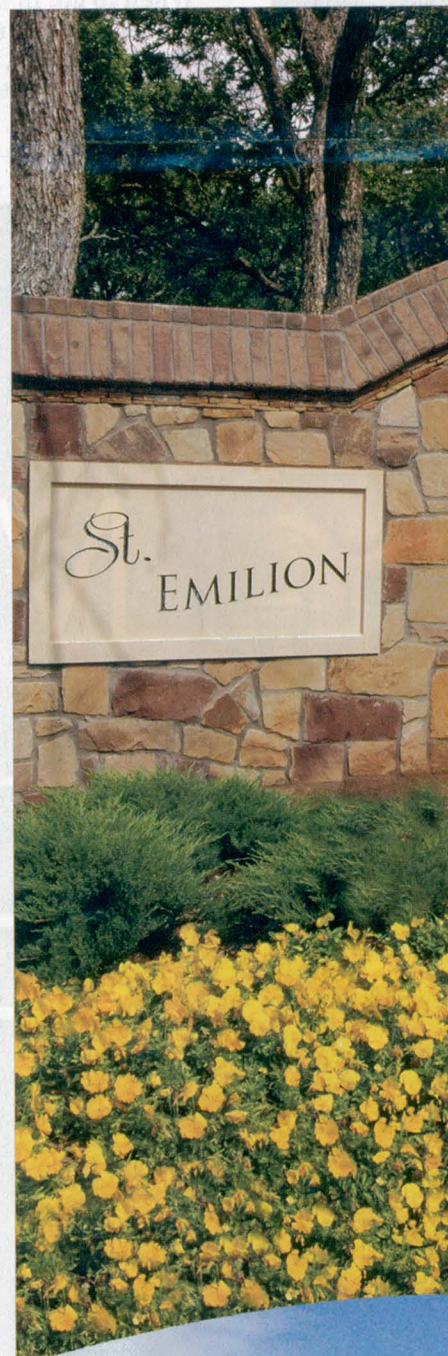
**Thirst quenchers:** So many cocktails ... so little time. Perusing Duce's drinks menu takes almost as long as it does to check out the food options. The Love-A-Lamp, Holly Go Lightly, Spanish Fly and Ciao Baby are highly recommended, as are the mojitos, featuring flavored rums.

**When to go:** On Friday and Saturday

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Brio Tuscan Grille in Southlake Town Square offers diners or those who wish to enjoy a cocktail a ton of indoor/outdoor ambiance thanks to a covered bar and dining area featuring light-filtering curtains and a view of the main patio.



## BROADSTONE CUSTOM HOMES

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construction/development (817) 832-5658  
construction management







Duce's outdoor patio offers many seating options, including a curved concrete bench. The arched steel rafters are covered with sheer sailcloth to filter light. Magnolias are used as screens on the side and back.

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nights, the patio starts hopping around 10 p.m., when folks head outside for after-dinner drinks and a DJ spins tunes into the wee hours. For a more sedate evening, go for the Wednesday night wine tasting starting at 6.

### Reata

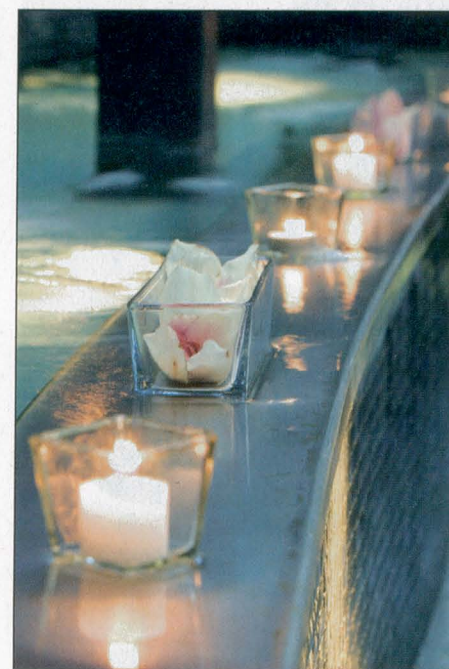
310 Houston St., Fort Worth  
817-336-1009; [www.reata.net](http://www.reata.net)

**The scene:** The stars at night are big and bright ... and one of the best ways to see them is from the rooftop at downtown Fort Worth's Reata. Featuring a Texas-sized bar and pub-height tables, the rustic cowboy chic space is casual enough for an impromptu after-work happy hour and elegant enough for pre-dinner cocktails on a special night out. The Western theme is done in a big way but doesn't go overboard. Besides, it's overshadowed by the big night sky and views of the city and surrounding Sundance Square.

**Best bites:** Though billed as appetizers, the tenderloin tamales, smoked quail with jalapeno Cheddar grits and calf fries with cream gravy are meals in and of themselves. A full dinner on the rooftop won't be complete unless someone orders the cowboy bone-in rib-eye with cook's butter, chicken-fried steak with cream gravy, or the chicken chili rellenos with roasted corn chowder.

**Thirst quenchers:** With Reata's bold cuisine and rugged Western accoutrements, a strong classic drink along the lines of a Rob Roy, whiskey sour or Tom Collins is called for. The bar also offers a good wine list as well as beer, margaritas and specialty cocktails, such as the Cowboy cosmopolitan and the Clear Fork cherry vodka limeade.

**When to go:** In sunny weather, the rooftop begins to fill in the late afternoon as downtown office workers and early diners arrive, but we think after dark is the best time to take advantage of the roof's vantage point.



The water feature with its tiled wall is the centerpiece of the Duce patio. Candles and flowers line the rim of the curved fountain.