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puts a new spin on glamping

A LA CARTE Local chefs share
their favorite veggie dishes

HOTSPOTS Houston ready to
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360 West

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Show Stopper

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SUPER SIZED

A rendering for the newly completed Marriott Marquis on the Avenida de las Americas features a Texas-shaped pool and island.

Image courtesy of Avenida Houston

Houston welcomes back the NFL's biggest game and its fans. The message? Let us entertain you.

By June Naylor

For the second time in 13 years, H Town hosts the sports world's biggest show. Whether you're a hard-core football enthusiast so devoted that you don't care which team plays in Super Bowl LI (but, yep, it really could be Dallas) or you're just tagging along with ardent fans, the Bayou City clearly has festive diversions for you. And the big bonus: little chance of a freak snowstorm. Follow our playbook for a long weekend filled with winners you can bet on. Enjoy these diversions the weekend of Feb. 5 and some even after the anticipated 1 million fans depart. Did we mention that odds are the Cowboys will be there?



A downtown Houston mural gives a nod to some of the city's celebrated character traits.

Photo courtesy of Visit Houston



Houston artist Ed Wilson's mobile, "Soaring in the Clouds," is suspended from the ceiling of the George R. Brown Convention Center.

Photo by Nash Baker



Patrick Renner's "Trumpet Flower" provides color and shade on Main Street Square. Several art installations add to the Super Bowl festivities.

Photo by Joel Luks, The CKP Group

The NFL Scene

Downtown's Discovery Green is ground zero for Super Bowl LIVE, a 10-day festival kicking off on Jan. 27. A parking lot when Houston last hosted a Super Bowl, this expansive green space with a lake, native landscaping, playgrounds, restaurants and public art now serves as the heart of the nation's fourth-largest city.

Bowl festivities take place along the Avenida

de las Americas, a pedestrian-friendly street and promenade separating Discovery Green from the extensively renovated George R. Brown Convention Center. The avenida also runs past the new 29-story, \$335 million Marriott Marquis and nearly a dozen new restaurants and bars with sidewalk seating and entertainment venues. Super Bowl LIVE events include a NASA-engineered virtual reality exhibit called Future Flight; NFL

Experience, a pro football theme park of sorts; and NFL Opening Night at Minute Maid Park, where fans watch from the stands as players and coaches meet with international media. Music events and art fill the avenida, too. Wander inside the convention center to see Houston artist Ed Wilson's magnificent "Soaring in the Clouds," a 67-foot mobile hanging



Sam Houston greets visitors at the entrance to Hermann Park.

Photo courtesy of Visit Houston



The new spa at the Four Seasons is an elegant escape.

Photo courtesy of Four Seasons Hotel Houston

from the ceiling.

Houston's Four Seasons Hotel — just opposite the corner of Discovery Green — remains downtown's celebrity hot spot (we've twice spotted Beyoncé there). Houston's NFL host committee agrees this is the see/be-seen place and gives props to the beautifully renovated Lamar Street entrance, as well as an elegant spa and impressive lobby bar opening in late January. Bayou & Bottle will offer more than 70 whiskey options, and guests will be able to buy bourbon lockers to store purchases. That might make B&B's the best seats in town for watching the game if you don't have tickets.



Reservations for a table at Steak 48 are highly desirable, as is the kitchen view. Below, One Fifth also is a carnivore's delight.

Photo courtesy of Shannon O'Hara

SUPER SIZED

THE DETAILS

Houston With two major airports for commercial and private flights, our southerly neighbor is quite accessible. Freeway traffic is always bustling, so if you drive there, you're wise to park your vehicle and rely on alternative methods of getting around: taxis, car service, Uber or light rail. Don't forget your walking shoes.

Diversions

A quick walk up Main Street from Discovery Green, following the light rail tracks (the rail line connects downtown with NRG Stadium and other parts of town), is Main Street Square, a pedestrian plaza between Walker and Dallas streets. In addition to abundant landscaping, a long reflecting pool and fountain jets bring a sense of serenity to the urban jungle, and a public art program called Art Blocks brings installations by local and international artists to the street. During Super Bowl time, look for "Trumpet Flower" by Houstonian Patrick Renner to provide color, architecture and shade; and "Saludos" by Dallasite M. Giovanni Valderas. Roam a little farther to Market Square Park, a busy outdoor space in the oldest part of downtown, for live music, artists at work, plenty to eat and drink, and space to sit and enjoy the fresh air.

Houston is graced with dense thickets of trees in neighborhoods abutting downtown

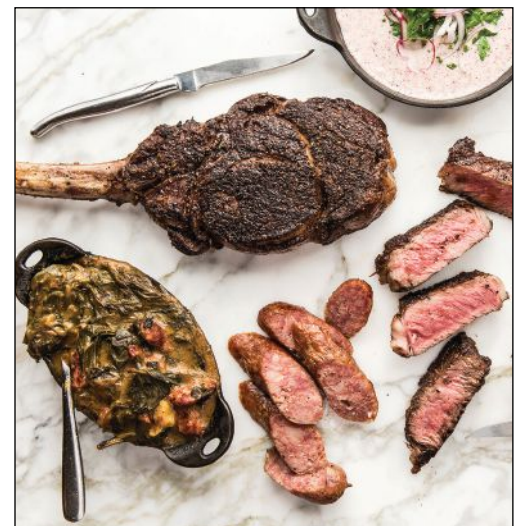


Photo by Julie Soefer

(and there are four national forests close by). Locals spend a lot of time outdoors, jogging, walking and cycling through Memorial Park and the newly renovated green spaces of Buffalo Bayou. Hermann Park — known

Inside Tips

WHAT'S NEW IN JANUARY

for its grand entrance with the Sam Houston statue, the Houston Zoo and the recently expanded McGovern Centennial Gardens — provides beautiful pockets for outdoor escapism just a short distance from downtown and near the acclaimed Museum of Fine Arts and the Menil Collection.

If you're seeking Super Bowl weekend celebrity sightings, head over to the restaurant-happy Washington Avenue district, about five minutes east of downtown near Buffalo Bayou. Bruno Mars is set to perform at the Sawyer Yards pop-up Club Nomadic on Feb. 3. Taylor Swift takes the same stage on Feb. 4.

Extreme eats and drinks

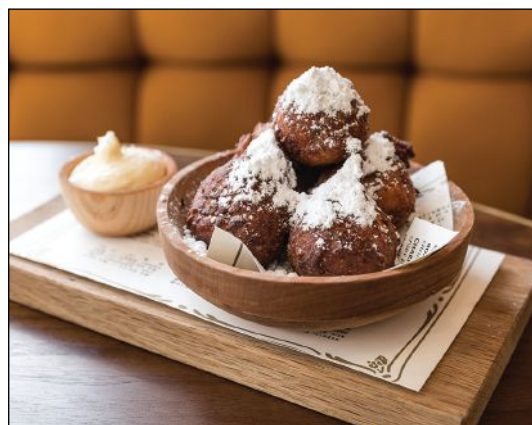
On a culinary hot-spots tasting tour, you can easily see why Houston is the foodie nation's newest food-and-beverage darling. In West University's Rice Village, home to a stash of fine boutiques, **Helen Greek Food and Wine** is good for an impossibly perfect plate of fetabrined chicken and sommelier-recommended picks from the all-Greek wine list. In the heart of Montrose, close to the museums, there's brand-new **One Fifth**, James Beard Award-winning chef Chris Shepherd's tasty ode to steaks. In the chic new River Oaks District — with shops like Canali, Jo Malone and Harry Winston — sought-after tables are at **Steak 48**, with a crushing bar scene and an enormous kitchen serving a dynamite seafood tower and fancy beef cuts; and **Le Colonial**, a two-story French-Vietnamese bar and restaurant, where don't-miss dishes include tamarind soup with shrimp and pineapple and grilled shrimp mousse on sugar cane. Refined but very comfortable, **State of Grace** in River Oaks might be Houston's finest brunch spot, thanks to a starter course of sparkling wine with cranberry grenadine and pomegranate seeds with a side of delicate beignets, followed by poached eggs over shrimp. Of course, the high-roller's dream dinner awaits at the venerable **Tony's**, where young chef



Egg-topped tamales are a favorite breakfast at Revival Market.

Photo courtesy of Revival Market

Kate McLean keeps the menu fresh and vibrant with her scallop crudo; orecchiette with hen of the woods mushrooms, pumpkin and pancetta; and elk chop with eggplant. Just north of downtown in The Heights, a neighborhood filled with Victorian and Craftsman architecture, check out booming watering hole **Eight Row Flint**, with its specialty cocktails and tacos in handmade tortillas. A low-key Heights breakfast spot is **Revival Market**. Fuel up on pastries and egg-topped tamales. It's safe to say, Houston's gastronomy is the best game in town. We'd even say it's super. **361**



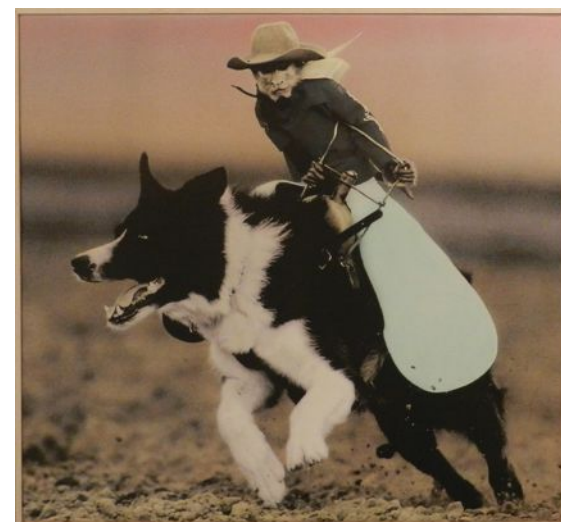
Beignets are a sweet brunch option at the popular State of Grace.

Photo by Julie Soefer



Simply perfect: the brined chicken at Helen Greek Food and Wine

Photo courtesy of Shannon O'Hara



Bob Wade, *Zippy AKA Whiplash*, 2016, Acrylic on digital canvas, 30 x 32 in.



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