



# Cullen's Upscale American Grille



When Cullen's Upscale American Grille first opened, guests had no idea what to expect from the opulent 30,000 square foot restaurant. Almost five months have passed since that opening and dinner at Cullen's is a smashing success, earning rave reviews and gathering repeat and new business daily. Manager Ryan Roberts, Chef Paul Lewis and the entire staff combine their skill and talent to make Cullen's a very desirable destination in Bay Area Houston. In addition to dinner, there are a lot of great things going on at Cullen's.

The fabulous ambiance and taste of Cullen's is available at lunch (11 a.m. – 4 p.m.) on a lighter scale. Lunch items are available from about \$9-\$20. According to Roberts, the menu is a lighter fare tailored for the busy weekday crowd. Garnering a lot of popularity is the pre-fixed lunch for \$19.95. With the pre-fixed menu, guests can enjoy a great three-course meal that allows them to choose from the soup of the day, a couple of salads and a choice of entrée items such as crispy shrimp, Frito pie, pan-roasted chicken, fish and short-rib ravioli. That Frito pie is no ordinary Frito Pie either. Made with Berkshire pork, chairman's reserve beef chili, toasted corn chips, Texas goat cheese, English and Wisconsin cheddar, crème fraiche and scallions – this is a palate popping Frito Pie. Items offered do change with what is fresh and available to ensure that lunch guests get the same quality food that dinner guests receive. Of course there are also a couple of dessert choices and Chef Lewis always has a dessert of the day.

Cullen's offers this great menu on weekends as well during Saturday and Sunday brunch (11 a.m. – 4 p.m.) Added to that menu are some wonderful breakfast items.

"There is something for everyone," said Roberts. "The whole idea is to create value and quality, yet get in and out within 30 minutes if necessary. It's a nice, quiet lunch spot that offers customers a great ambiance for business or personal lunch without turning into a long, drawn-out lunch. However, others may desire to linger a couple of hours over lunch. It's all about the needs of the guests."

It's a great alternative for lunch. The French dip and Reuben sandwiches are great and made in-house. All breads are made in-house. Any salad can have chicken, shrimp or salmon added for a small, additional charge.

Cullen's is an amazing venue for special events. The main dining room seats up to 260 people, a large ballroom seats 200 for dinner or 300 for a stand-up reception, other rooms seat anywhere from 10-60 guests and depending on the size party – several rooms can be used together. Cullen's offers many interesting spaces for private groups including lounges, nooks, bars, patios – the combination is endless. Guests are already enjoying the competition billiard tables and shuffleboard table either before or after dinner. In fact, many large groups (500+) have already booked their holiday parties at Cullen's.

Cullen's offers something that is not found anywhere else – Macy's Table. This exclusive room is suspended high above the main dining room with glass sidewalls. Everyone has those special mo-

ments in life that need to be unforgettable and unique in nature. The goal is to provide an experience unlike anything else in the greater Houston area. The chef works closely with the organizer to design a menu specifically for the party. The food is all cooked upstairs with a designated chef and kitchen solely for the private event.

The chef discusses the options with the party host and determines the reason for the event, allergies, likes and dislikes of the guests and what is fresh, available and in season.

"Macy's Table is a five-, six-, seven- or eight-course meal paired with outstanding wines and liquors," said Lewis. "The quality of food, ingredients and service are unparalleled. The menu uses ingredients from local farmers. There are some great farmers throughout the area and the state. We blend locally and globally to create a one-of-a-kind experience. We can have local produce, chicken and beef or we can mix it with some great Kobe beef, fish from Holland and other global cuisine." The event and courses are tailored to the guests' preferences, so the sky is the limit.

"The aim is to give the guests an outstanding experience from the food standpoint to the wine element and service as well," said Lewis.

"The idea of the experience at Macy's Table is to give the guests an opportunity to experience a lot of different flavors and tastes," said Roberts. "Guests can walk away after seven or eight courses, feeling perfect. It's not just a big plate of food. They've gotten to experience this whole cornucopia of flavors throughout the evening without walking away feeling stuffed and overfilled." The staff enjoys working Macy's Table events almost as much as the guests.

"Macy's Table is so much fun for us," said Lewis. "We have a dedicated person taking care of Macy's Table. There are no limitations; we are there for the guests. It's about taking time, having fun and doing some interesting things with different flavors. Part of the enjoyment comes from seeing the reaction immediately from the guests. You get to see the reaction straight away as those flavors pop on the palate and the senses come alive. As a chef, it's very, very satisfying to see." There is no charge to use Macy's Table, only a \$1500 food/beverage minimum — which is really quite reasonable for 12 guests at a special venue of this caliber.

Cullen's Upscale American Grille wants to be a destination for Bay Area Houston so they have introduced Cullen's Live. This live music venue on Thursday, Friday or Saturday nights can seat about 200 people utilizing both upstairs and downstairs areas.

"The music starts between 8 p.m. and 10 p.m.," said Roberts. "Our goal is to have entertainment all week at some point. We would like people to come in for music, Salsa dancing, stand-up comedy

# Is A Culinary Destination

by First M. Last  
Photos by Brian Stewart Photography

and more. We want to try different things so that people can get everything they need at Cullen's and be close to home."

"We want to take care of people for the evening," adds Lewis. "We serve some very interesting appetizers in the bar. Guests can come to the bar and enjoy appetizers, cocktails, dinner and a show or just appetizers and a show. There are all sorts of options."

Executive chef Paul Lewis is highly respected in the industry with over 21 years of experience. He began his cooking skills as a young boy in the United Kingdom and honed them into the amazing chef he is today. He worked for several years at some high-end London restaurants before joining the Four Seasons and working in Houston, Dallas, Dublin and Hawaii.

"It's been an adventure so far, just having fun exploring different things and seeing what we can do in the kitchen," said Lewis. "We are very broad in what we can offer — from casual to fine dining, which why we have such early success. Customers get the same quality service whether they come in for a salad only or a steak dinner.

"We'll change with the seasons," said Lewis. "We use what is seasonal and what is fresh, changing garnishes and fruits as the seasons change. This is cooking food properly as Mother Nature intended."

Lewis believes in showcasing what the local farmers are growing. He wants people to know that in this area alone there are some really good farmers for produce, salad greens, citrus and more.

Cullen's Upscale American Grille is evolving into a one-of-a-kind venue. Lunch, brunch, dinner, live music or a special event to treasure – Cullen's takes care of it all with a casual elegance that focuses on guests. 11500 Space Center Blvd., 281.991.DINE or 281.991.2000, [www.cullenshouston.com](http://www.cullenshouston.com).

