

WINE IS FINE:
Josephine's adds
a touch of class to
Frisco thanks to
owners Chris and
Cynde Gangi.



NEIGHBORHOOD FIND

Josephine's Wine Bar & Bistro.

As the Dallas North Tollway climbs toward Frisco like a stubborn vine, you can see clusters of development sprouting at every crossroad. Lebanon Road's pretty far up there. But already it has scores of new-ish apartments (\$635 a month for a one-bedroom, barbecue grills and jogging trails inclusive) and tracts of oversize houses on under-size lots, poking up over brick walls.

There's your starter audience for Josephine's Wine Bar and Bistro, an Italian restaurant in a small shopping center so new that the parking lot still looks "clean." It's almost like a food court, with neighboring Bonnie Ruth's Cafe, Kotta Sushi, and It's A Grind coffee house.

Josephine's comes with not-too-shabby credentials. Owner Chris Gangi previously worked for Neiman Marcus as a regional manager of the restaurant division. Chef Chris Peters, whom you'll see frequently wandering through the dining room, has worked at the Mansion on Turtle Creek. The servers include Mansion alumni, too, so there's an attention to detail that's so earnest it can feel hokey.

Food—pastas, pizza, chops, panini sandwiches—comes on strong, with rich and robust flavors. Why do regular mashed potatoes when you can spike them with garlic? And what's the only way to serve filet mignon? Pepper-crusted, of course.

But it wasn't simply about hitting you over the head. The filet gave a twist on meat and potatoes, with pureed parsnip subbing for hum-

drum potato and a sophisticated chutney with satisfyingly chewy bits of black mission fig.

Pasta dishes included tagliatelle—a fancier word for fettuccine—with an earthy lamb ragout. Ground like hamburger, the lamb came bound in a thick tomato sauce that was refreshingly neither pert nor sweet nor juicy, but more like tomato gravy, very masculine and terse.

Pizzas were creative, with fine, upscale toppings such as fennel and eggplant. Even the pepperoni got dressed up, with the addition of prosciutto, smoked onions, tiny cubes of soft potato, and arugula. Wonderful flavors.

Gangi's also fancies itself a wine bar, so there's a wine room with wooden beams and a polished slate floor. Wine comes in flights: three 1-ounce pours in just about every varietal, from "world cabernets" to "Sicilian reds." The list is a piecemeal collection of name brands (Conundrum), locals (Kathryn Hall), and affordable Italian wines.

Much attention has been lavished on the décor, from the polished stained concrete floors to the 8-by-10-foot commissioned mural of Sicily on the wall, reproduced from a tapestry hanging in the map room of the Vatican. Dedicated to Gangi's grandmother, Josephine, the place is unquestionably a labor of love, with vintage family photos hanging throughout the 3,400-square-foot space. Sounds huge, but out there in the still-developing wilds of Frisco, it doesn't seem so. 6959 Lebanon Rd. Ste. 114, Frisco. 972-712-4343. \$\$\$ ♀ —T.G.