



Outdoor dining ROUNDUP

BY DAVE FERMAN | PHOTOGRAPHY BY DARREN WHITE

Texas is a fantastic place to live for all kinds of folks, but it's pretty much heaven on earth for fans of *al fresco* dining: Thanks to the state's beauty and warm weather, outdoor dining – be it on a dock, at a table on the sidewalk, nestled in a covered

patio, or having a big cookout in the back yard – is one of those quintessential, often-enjoyed experiences of the Lone Star state.

We can sit in the fresh air and nosh on Mexican food or



steaks or barbecue and sip a Shiner or a margarita virtually all year, and we do: Some places, such as the Oasis on Lake Travis near Austin, or the patio of Joe T. Garcia's in north Fort Worth, are known mainly for their outdoor patios, far more than their food, and the restaurants along

the river walk in San Antonio are one of the city's major tourist destinations.

But why go that far, when there's plenty of excellent outdoor dining right here in Parker, Hood and Somervell



Fort Worth residents Mike and Vicki Lewis sit down for lunch at The Malt Shop.

counties? Below you'll find a list of some of our favorite places to soak up the calories, the suds, and the sunshine.

Weatherford

THE MALT SHOP

For 51 years now, lovers of thick malts (try the butterscotch!) and cheap 'n' tasty hamburgers have been pulling up to the pink building just east of town on the Fort Worth Highway. Looking every inch like a place that Elvis might have stopped in on one of his frequent tours of Texas in the '50s, the Malt Shop continues to draw tons of folks who eat in their cars (there's enough cover for "eight or nine" vehicles, says owner Gary Williams) or at one of the picnic tables.

2028 Fort Worth Highway
9:45 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. Monday-Saturday, noon to 9:30 p.m. Sunday.
817-596-0005

SKINNY'S HAMBURGERS

Just a few blocks west of Weatherford's downtown square, Skinny's has been serving up burgers, catfish, chicken-fried steak and more since 2001. The wooden deck on either side of the front door seats about 70 people, according to owner Ashley McLennan, and really fills up Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights and at lunch on Sunday. Local bands play sometimes, too.

504 Palo Pinto St.
11 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily.
817-594-3101

Granbury

GROGGY DAWG GRILL & MARINA

Man, do we love eating by water. There's just something about the combination of a warm night, the fresh breeze coming in off the water and some good seafood that never gets stale, and one of the best places on Lake Ganbury is this casual hang-out, which features stuff like catfish, traditional fish and chips and grilled shrimp skewers and great people – and boat – watching.

"It's pretty packed," says manager Peggy Lovinsky. "People drive in on

Manager, Bodie McLennan, Skinny's Hamburgers



The Tiki Bar at the Groggy Dawg Grill & Marina

their jet skis or boat and tie down and come in and have something to eat." There's live music on the weekends, often from one-man band Kim Youkim, and boats and jet skis can be rented at the marina.

1003 White Cliff Road
3 p.m. to midnight Tuesday-Thursday, noon to midnight Friday and Saturday.
817-579-9978

EL SENOR AYALA'S

Located half a block off the town square and across the street from Babe's Chicken Dinner House, El Senor has a generous covered patio that seats around 80 and a menu of well-prepared basics like burritos, chalupas, flautas and steaks. People cap off an afternoon of shopping here, or grab some dinner before a performance at Granbury Live and other favorite nighttime activities. There's also a country band on Fridays.

"We have a lot of people from out of town," says assistant manager Joanna Trujillo. "It's most popular in the summer or when there's a celebration, like Memorial Day, we get real busy. People will wait to sit on the patio."

115 West Pearl Street
 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday-Thursday,
 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Friday and
 Saturday.
 817-573-8960

STRINGFELLOW'S

Our lone fine dining entry has the feel of a genteel Old World pub with its shaded courtyard looking out on downtown; it's the perfect place for a long lunch if you're in the mood for soup, sandwiches or salads. The evening menu is pricier and includes stuff like tilapia tacos, steak Diane, and numerous fish dishes. There is also a large wine list.

101 East Pearl St.
 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Thursday-Sunday.
 817-573-6262

Glen Rose

LOCO COYOTE GRILL

Okay, we lied. Famed for its mammoth portions of amazing barbecue and casual setting, the

Coyote isn't in Glen Rose. But it's close: From downtown, you go about eight miles west on Highway 67, and look for the sign and turnoff to your right. Then you go down a winding country road and there you are – you can dine inside the low tin-and-wood building or, more likely, at picnic tables on the raised, covered patio. Waits can be long for dinner, but there's horseshoes and sometimes volleyball games – as well as plenty of cold beer and margaritas, the latter served in mason jars – to while away the time.

And when the food comes, look out: From mammoth hamburgers to plates piled Matterhorn-high with delectable catfish or barbecued ribs, brisket and sausage, this is a place where you want to come hungry. And whatever you do, box up some of your dinner – we're thinking maybe half to two-thirds – to save room for the legendary blueberry



El Senor Ayala's

cobbler or, our favorite, the truly fabulous bread pudding.

1795 County Road
 5-8 p.m. Thursday, 4-9 p.m. Friday,
 noon to 9 p.m. Saturday, and noon
 to 5 p.m. Sunday.
 1-254-897-2761 🍓