

ROUGE

812 Westheimer Road, Houston 77006, (713) 520-7955

Rouge is fitted out like a Parisian bistro, with banquette seating around the room, with mirrors over the banquettes, so that the entire room – and the diners in it – are always visible with an imperceptible turn of the head. This very intimate setting is perfect for a focused business meal, or for focused entertaining on a personal level. Appetizers include Wonton Crab Cake Sandwich, tomato fondue, and virgin olive oil, Duck Confit with farm goat cheese tart, and Romaine salad with Spanish anchovies, tossed in Caesar dressing. Entrees include Braised Veal Shank, orange scented, with ricotta salata raviolis; Cassoulet-like-in-Toulouse, baked coco beans, herb sausage, chicken breast seared on the grill; Grilled Venison Chop, with pomegranate, sage, apple compote, and green asparagus; and Lamb Rack Persillade, with spring vegetables and carrot ginger jus; and Grilled Lobster, saffron risotto, scallion and cilantro, and avocado tempura. For those with a sweet tooth, Rouge offers Chocolate liegeois, vanilla gelato with chocolate sauce and chantilly whipped cream, Toasted Hazelnut Canoli with vanilla ice cream and cocoa sauce, or Pecan Pie with bourbon sauce and bourbon ice cream. Open for lunch and dinner, Rouge also has a party room upstairs.

GRAVITAS

807 Taft, Houston 77019, (713) 522-0995

Hankamer first experienced the cooking of Gravitas at Central Market's cooking school. This was enough to stimulate our first visit to the restaurant itself, located in the former Antone's location on Taft, between Allen Parkway and W. Gray. Corn Chowder with Applewood Smoked Bacon or Chilled Gazpacho with Avocado Cream are two good ways to start off your meal, which is served in a large open room with easy sight lines into the spacious kitchen. Among the salad list are Salade Nicoise with Grilled Tuna and Warm Roasted Potato Salad with Arugula, Parmesan Cheese, and Garlic oil. Pasta selections include Herb Risotto with Roasted Tomatoes, and Baked Spatzle with Gruyere Cheese. Entrees include Steak Frite with Mushrooms and Onions, Veal Schnitzel with Buttered Spatzle, Mussels Steamed in Stella Artois and served with Fries, and Roast Chicken with Cornbread and Caramelized Shallots. Sides include Green Bean Cassoulet, Roast Potatoes, and Fried Gnocchi. For dessert the still-hungry diner can choose from Lemon Tart with Pistachio Cream, Butterscotch Bread Pudding with Chocolate Ice Cream, and Chocolate Decadence with Vanilla Ice Cream. A separate bar area with couch seating and an interesting laminated bar top offer a see-and-be-seen option to the smart pre-and post-dinner and theater crowd.

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Note: By way of qualifications for reviewing restaurants, Hankamer has owned and operated numerous restaurants, coffee shops, hotels, discotheques and banquet halls over the last forty years; he has travelled to over 70 countries and has studied and lived in Europe for over three years; he was co-owner of a home delivery wine of the month club and imported his own wine labels for years.

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