

RESTAURANT UPDATE

Benjy's on Washington 5922 Washing Ave. (The Heights) 713.868.1131

This long-awaited arrival on Washington of the immensely popular Benjy's (original location in Rice Village) has been greeted with strong patronage from loyal old customers and new customers alike. The techno-modern free standing building, decorated with such eclectic touches as a banquet table surrounded by a fence of upright varnished cypress knees, and a long window box planted with mother-in-law tongues, sets the mood for relaxed dining in a upbeat and oh-so-slightly zany atmosphere. The real creativity, however, appears on the menu. "Small Plates" include Warm pistachio crusted goat cheese cakes with carrot saltines and golden raisins; Spicy tuna tartar on crispy edamame roll with spicy avocado puree; and Beef sliders with house pickles, Texas cheddar, and crispy onions. "Green Plates" encompass Caesar with cilantro-wasabi dressing; Baby arugula with spiced walnuts, pomegranate, house-made ricotta, and lemon vinaigrette; and Chopped Asian salad-grilled chicken, wontons, toasted cashews, and soy garlic dressing. "From the Wood Oven": Chicken sausage pizza, shaved apple, fennel, and mascarpone; and White pizza lump crab, oven dried red peppers, spinach, and 4 cheeses. "Large Plates" consist in part of Buffalo hangar steak with bone marrow risotto and roasted vegetables; Seared scallops with Jerusalem artichokes, broccolini, and ginger vinaigrette; Big bowl of noodles with braised rib eye in savory-ginger broth; and Kurobota pork osso bucco with pistachio puree and truffle thyme au jus. Jess at the downstairs bar is certain to attentively provide you with an adult beverage, and the hideaway bar upstairs...well, stroll up and discover the music and fun which awaits!

The Capital Grille 5365 Westheimer Rd. - Galleria Area- 713.623.4600

This sedate wood paneled steak house has been a long time favorite for corporate entertaining, and a place for regular folks to enjoy their special occasion in a richly decorated setting. Service is friendly, professional, and correct. The cocktail bar offers good people-watching, as it borders the hostess podium for the restaurant. Appetizers feature Classic caviar, perfectly chilled; Cold shellfish platter, with one pound baby lobster, icy Gulf coast jumbo shrimp, and freshly shucked oysters; Lobster and crab cakes with hints of dry mustard and red pepper, paired with fresh, sweet corn relish; Smoked salmon, cold-smoked in Maine, with accents of capers, dill mayonnaise, and zesty onion pita crisps. For soups, Clam chowder, which combines New England 's fresh clams and tender potatoes is on the menu, along with Lobster bisque drizzled with dry sack sherry; also featured is French onion soup, covered with a blanket of melt-in-your mouth cheeses. Salads include The Wedge, iceberg lettuce with vine-ripe tomatoes and crisp smoked bacon, dressed with tangy chunks of bleu cheese. Chef's suggestions and Main courses include Filet Oscar, 10 oz. filet served with steamed asparagus spears, colossal lump crabmeat, drizzled with house made Bearnaise; Porcini rubbed Delmonico with 8 year old balsamic, with a porcini mushroom crust; Dry aged steak au poivre with Courvoisier cream sauce-black peppercorns crushed and rubbed into dry aged sirloin, and seared to its juicy best; Double cut lamb chops, four flavorful ribs double cut and grilled the way you like them; Broiled fresh lobster, whether 2, 3, 4, or five pounder...you will be pleased! Side orders feature Onion rings, Truffle fries, Lyonnaise potatoes, One pound baked potato with all the trimmings, Fresh creamed spinach, and Roasted seasonal mushrooms. The desserts here are awesome, so come hungry. Most servings of all menu items are large and often can be split between two diners.

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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. The opinions expressed in Hankamer Commercial RESTAURANT UPDATE are the opinions of Hankamer only and these opinions may not be shared by RED News or any other advertising medium in which UPDATE appears. Copyright 2007 Ray Hankamer, Hankamer Commercial/Hankamer & Associates.