

J. Black's splendidly plays matchmaker



In a town like Austin, a versatile, comfortable setting, cool lighting and tons of art alone will not a classy bar make.

You'll need an impressive wine list and an impressive chef to get anywhere with social diners here.

At J. Black's Feel Good Lounge on West Sixth Street, chef Josie Paredes serves food as worthy of attention as the upscale yet casual design of the place, the views of quickly climbing condos along West Fifth Street and the young, well-dressed clientele.

For Paredes, who's proved her worth in some of the best kitchens around town, including Eddie V's, the focus has always been on the food, which is lucky for J. Black's wine expert and co-owner Brian Franzman,

also formerly of Eddie V's, who gets to pair wine to go with her dishes.

The plates at J. Black's are meant for sharing: Kobe sliders, pizzas, crab cakes, bruschetta and shrimp cocktail. Paredes — whose hard-working nature is proved by the taco stand, La Fantabulous, she runs Thursdays through Saturdays at the corner of Barton Springs Road and South Lamar Boulevard — has new menu items slated for J. Black's.

But rest assured the crab cakes and lamb chop lollipops are so finger-licking delicious that people will be flocking there to enjoy them with a glass of fine wine.

— Addie Broyles



New Zealand Lamb Chop Lollipops

Char-grilled and lightly seasoned with a horseradish crème fraîche.

Angeline Pinot Noir, 2006, California (\$16.99 at Grape Vine Market)

The Angeline Pinot Noir, made in the cool Russian River Valley in California, is a brilliant, deep ruby color with aromas of sweet berries and a touch of vanilla, with very little tannins. The softness of this wine complements the lamb chops.



Ricotta and Gorgonzola Focaccia

Ricotta, gorgonzola and mozzarella cheese with a warm pesto dip.

Treana White Meritage, 2004, California (\$19.99 at Grape Vine Market)

The floral aromatics, intense stone fruit flavors and overtones of honey complement the delectable blend of creamy cheeses on the focaccia dish. This wine, made from Rhone grapes in California's central coast, also has particularly lush mouthfeel, as well as nice fruit and acidity.



Crab Cakes

Sautéed and served with a creamy remoulade sauce, accompanied by a shaved fennel and citrus salad.

Martin Codax, 2006, Spain (\$14.49 at Grape Vine Market)

Martin Codax, an elegant, dry and crisp albariño from the seafood-rich northwest corner of Spain, features the full-bodied flavors of ripe apples, peach, apricot, melon, grapefruit and lemon zest, which enhances the crab cakes by cutting down on the natural, rich buttery flavor of the crab.

J. Black's Feel Good Lounge Famous Crab Cake Recipe

For the crab cake:

- 1 egg
- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- 1 green onion (chopped)
- ½ Tbsp. creole mustard
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. white pepper
- 8 oz. fresh crab meat
- ½ cup crushed crackers
- 8 oz. can panko bread crumbs

For creole mustard sauce:

- 2 cups mayonnaise
- 1 cup milk
- ½ cup horseradish
- 2 Tbsp. ketchup
- 1 cup creole mustard
- 2 Tbsp. lemon juice
- ½ Tbsp. salt
- ½ Tbsp. white pepper

For crab cakes, mix eggs, mayonnaise, chopped green onion, creole mustard, salt and white pepper in large mixing bowl. Fold in crab meat and crushed crackers. Portion out 2 ounces of mix; roll in panko bread crumbs and sauté until golden brown.

For creole mustard sauce, add all ingredients together and puree until smooth.

— Josie Paredes, J. Black's Feel Good Lounge executive chef

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