



Cured at Pearl



La Panaderia



## I'll Have What They're Having:

Where Celebrities Eat, Shop & Play in SA

By Lakendra Lewis



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Catching a glimpse of the stars doesn't always require a telescope nor does it have to mean booking a ticket to Hollywood. The stars are just as bright in Texas, where celebrities like Dave Chappelle, Ariana Grande, and "Weird Al" Yankovic have recently been spotted in San Antonio taking in some of the food, fun, and festivities the city has to offer.

If you've ever wondered where the A-listers like to eat, shop and relax in the River City, read on for local and national celeb go-to spots.

### GARCIA'S MEXICAN RESTAURANT

San Antonians are no strangers to this mom-and-pop establishment on Fredericksburg Road that has been serving up tasty Tex-Mex dishes for nearly six decades.

The most recent celebrity shout-out came from Gabriel "Fluffy" Iglesias who, when asked during a Reddit "Ask Me Anything" chat what restaurant he liked to frequent when in town, revealed he enjoys Garcia's Mexican Restaurant.

The popular comedian/actor, known for his stand-up routines that often poke good-natured fun at his weight and love of food, has made stopping at Garcia's a regular part of his tour itinerary for the past five or six years.

John Garcia, co-owner of Garcia's Mexican Restaurant, said Iglesias likes to come in once a year when he's in town to do a show. His favorite menu items? The breakfast tacos and the award-winning brisket served on nachos or in tacos.

Still located on the same stretch of road upon which it was opened, John and his three siblings now run the business that

was started by their parents Julio and Yolanda Garcia in 1962.

In addition to the brisket, which was added to the menu in 2005 and is cooked to tender perfection in an old-school barbecue oakwood pit by co-owner and champion Pitmaster Andrew Garcia, other menu favorites include the carne guisada, the potato and egg breakfast taco; and for those who like spice in their life, the carne de puerco—a dish made with jalapenos; as well as homemade bottled sauces that include an in-house habanero sauce. Sabor!

### NICHE AT PEARL

Like so many women, Erika Prosper Nirenberg—wife of Mayor Ron Nirenberg—is no stranger to the anxiety of standing in front of her closet, wondering what to wear. The pressure was never more apparent than when preparing for a visit from the King and Queen of Spain to San Antonio a few years ago to celebrate the city's tricentennial.

Enter Niche at Pearl, a trendy clothing boutique located at the historic Pearl Brewery.

"When the King and Queen of Spain came to visit and I had a choice of what I was going to wear to all the non-stop meetings and events, the only clothing I felt comfortable wearing was Niche, so I went to them and asked them to help me pick out four or five outfits to help me through those three





Gabriel "Fluffy" Iglesias and John Garcia, Garcia's Mexican Restaurant



Garcia's Mexican Restaurant

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days," Nirenberg said. "They were kind and helped me choose a variety of dresses with just the right lengths and shapes, and I've seen them do that for anyone, not just a mayor's wife. I felt super pretty and elegant. It's just a special place."

Founded by mother/daughter team Nilgun Derman (designer) and Ayse Derman (creative director), Niche at the Pearl boasts a modern collection of clothing and apparel made and designed in the United States. According to its website, the collection "draws inspiration from the energetic district of culture, creativity, cuisine and fashion" of the Alamo City.

In addition to clothes, the boutique offers a variety of other selections, including accessories, children's apparel, facemasks, gifts, home decor, D.I.Y. fabric kits, and beauty and skincare products.

A foodie at heart, some of Nirenberg's other favorite local haunts include Cafe Azteca for a good cup of java, Clementine for American-French fare (try the chanterelle mushroom risotto), and the B.O.T. (bacon, oyster and tomato sandwich) at Cured in the Pearl.

#### HOTEL EMMA

Of all the grand tales that make up the history of San Antonio, the true story of the Hotel Emma has to be among the city's most fascinating, its early 20th Century love triangle is as intriguing and alluring as the lovely interior of the hotel itself.

Music icon and actress Cher was so impressed with the place while in town for a show in 2019 that she took to Twitter to dish about the tale of the three Emmas, a story you can read on the hotel's website that proves real life truly is stranger than fiction.

Once a 19th-century brewhouse, Hotel Emma is located on the Northern Reach of the San Antonio River at The Pearl. It has 146 rooms as well as private terraces with idyllic views of the river, and amenities such as a spa, library, exhibition kitchen, and the famous Elephant Cellar room, just to name a few.

Check out—or better yet, check into—this breathtaking hotel for yourself.

#### DOINGS DOWNTOWN

When he isn't covering events as one of the city's most recognizable television reporters, early morning weekday anchor, and "Fox News First" co-host, Ernie Zuniga likes to go downtown to enjoy big events. As the 2018 King of the River Walk, he presided over countless river parades. He also likes the annual San Antonio Cocktail Conference, a week-long affair held in January where bartenders and craft cocktail enthusiasts descend on downtown for seminars and tastings.

The father of three also likes to take in shows at the historic Majestic Theatre and take the kids down the street to La Panaderia Bakery Café on Houston Street. "As my kids get older it's cool to introduce them to some of these places," Zuniga said. "There's such a rich history."

#### WRITER'S BIO

Lakendra Lewis is an arts & entertainment journalist, editor, and author whose articles have appeared in *Edible San Antonio Magazine*, *The Texas Observer*, and *San Antonio Christian Woman Magazine*. She enjoys movies, music, cooking, singing, and telling other people's stories. You can contact her/read more about her work at [lakendralewis.journoportfolio.com](https://lakendralewis.journoportfolio.com).