

LOOK WHO'S TALKING

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY JUSTIN CLEMONS



CUISINE KING: Matthew Mabel at I Fratelli in Irving.

FOOD FETISH *He's a consultant to the connoisseurs, and Matthew Mabel is eating it up*

Matthew Mabel skipped college to promote rock bands in the United Kingdom, and better, his father was OK with it. Then, at 20, when he was much older, he owned nightclubs and stayed up until 4AM. Now, at 45, he eats out 14 times a week. Matthew Mabel, it would seem, has had a lot of fun. And, crazily, he's happy.

"I was sitting at the Beverly Wilshire not too long ago thinking that the last time I was there, I was there with Phoebe Snow, Fleetwood Mac and Supertramp. First, I thought, 'Where did I go wrong?' But I didn't go wrong."

Mabel, who's single and lives in Oak Lawn, describes his current gig as "age-appropriate fun." He made the transition from the music business to the dining industry 15 years ago, founding Surrender, an organizational development company that works with clients (70 percent are restaurants) to help them function at their very best. His relationships are long and personal, some lasting more than five years. "I like to think

we create harmony. You can tell that everyone is happy when a year later, they are still smiling," says Mabel, a New Yorker who came to Dallas 20 or so years ago, via London.

He has crafted a certain niche for himself, nurturing local spots including I Fratelli, Mercy Wine Bar and Del Frisco's in Fort Worth. Because dining these days is such a blend of food, service, design and pulse, and because the tablescape here has exploded in fantastic ways, Mabel's task is multi-pronged. "People always have restaurant ideas, but if you can't explain why it is special, there is no reason to build it. We have enough now already," he says, over lunchtime soup at Parigi.

As for favorites, well, a guy like Mabel—with foodie friends like his—isn't allowed to have favorites. "I can like funky ethnic, or one of the city's most elegant experiences, depending on mood." Of course, for the seven meals he has at home, there's always take-out from Central Market. ■

HOTS: Caring, anything organic, appreciating creativity, teams working in harmony, runner's high, embracing the city, water watching, Future Sonics ear monitors, Netflix, Wu Wei tea from Seattle's teahouse Kuan Yin **NOTS:** Gossip, small talk, hot food served on a cold plate, taking forever to get the check, teams with people out of position, leaf blowers, digital fatigue, Mac snobs, manufactured tradition