

# STYLE | FASHION | SOCIAL

# Parade CITY

HOUSTON AUGUST 2007

## New Doors

### Reef

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**Keys to the Door:** Chef/owner Bryan Caswell, owner Bill Floyd.  
**What's Cooking:** Jean-Georges Vongerichten's talented protégé Bryan Caswell has made a big splash with the opening of his sensational seafood eatery, Reef, in Midtown. Last year, he exited Vongerichten's Bank restaurant at Hotel Icon, hatching plans to open his own restaurant with partner Bill Floyd. He and Floyd found an industrial space, once the home of a car dealership, and enlisted the help of designer Lisa Pope Westerman and architect Brooks Howell (principals of the architecture firm O4D Office for Design) to transform it. Their inspiration: the rough-hewn exterior of an oyster shell that, when opened, reveals a beautiful, lustrous nacre — as well as, if you're lucky, a pearl. That vision is translated here into soothing sea-glass hues of blue and green. Penny tile creates a fish-scale effect along the open kitchen bar, and iridescent capiz-shell pendant lights dangle from the cement ceiling that soars above opalescent tabletops. Trippy, up-lit plaster walls welcome the sea with a wave-like pattern above the high-backed banquettes. Separating the private dining area from the large, open dining room is the wine box: a futuristic glass structure with steel shelves from which a selection of well-priced (marked at retail) wines are fetched. About 70 percent of the lunch and dinner menu features seafood dishes, such as a stellar tempura soft-shell crab with Caswell's upscale version of a taqueria-style, pickled vinaigrette drizzled atop (\$14.50), mussels steamed open in a broth of Shiner Bock beer (\$11.50) and perfectly cooked grilled scallops nestled atop truffle oil-scented polenta and sautéed mushrooms (\$23). A Texas native who grew up fishing along the Gulf, Caswell makes a point of cooking local catches that you seldom see on restaurant menus, such as tripletail, wahoo and triggerfish. *Laurann Claridge*