

# Intown

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2017

## PERSON OF THE YEAR

*Lisa Falkenberg*

## RESTAURATEURS OF THE YEAR

FINANCIAL ADVICE | ROCKETS' DARYL MOREY

SUPER BOWL CITY | DESIGNER KATHY ANDERSON | ARTS+EVENTS

(top to bottom) The Dunlavy,  
Lisa Falkenberg after her  
Pulitzer announcement,  
Modern Wine Cellar by  
Eklektik Designs



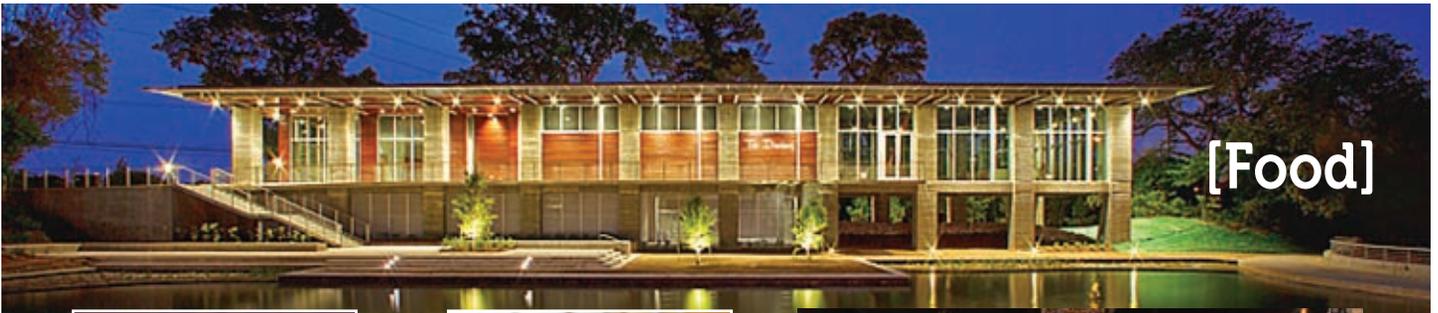
## Common Ground

**A**fter somewhat a tumultuous year, I'm looking forward to 2017, with hopes that we as Americans and as human beings can find a more common ground on the beliefs we share, rather than differences that divide us. Far too much racial strife and anxiety exist in the world because people most often look at differences, rather than similarities. Many years ago, we fought for these rights, therefore, our nation's freedom and tolerance must never be doubted. Most of us want fairly simple things in life; health, happiness, and a good well-paying job. People from all aspects of life feel left out, unfairly targeted, and minimized. It should be our New Year's resolution to understand and respect others who don't share our same beliefs or looks. By doing so we may find a new friend or excellent employee. Most often, when we actually get to know someone, we are surprised by how much we have in common with them. Take a look at this year's holiday gatherings and see our own families' diversities. Whether at the family dinner, office party, or with friends celebrating, there may be many differences. But more importantly is the commonality we share when we open our minds. Houston is considered to be a divergent and diverse city which serves us well. We each should continue to be leaders in tolerance and fairness to all by setting examples of how to not only get along but to prosper. Open up to a myriad of people with different ideas and backgrounds! Realizing how much we are alike than different is a good axiom.

This year's selection for Person of The Year, Lisa Falkenberg, is an award-winning machine and an important voice in our city. Her humble beginnings and recently becoming the first person at the Hearst Corporation in its long history to ever receive the esteemed Pulitzer Prize for Commentary is worthy of recognition.

Hosting this year's Super Bowl is an honor and a boon to the local economy. The world will be focused on Houston, and once again it is our time to shine as one the most welcoming and important cities in America.





*Chef Charles Clark - Photo courtesy STP Images*



*Grant Cooper - Photo courtesy of Todd Parker*



*Dunlavy Exterior - courtesy of David Jones Photography and Interior (inset)*

# Clark Cooper Concepts

## Restaurateurs of The Year

by Mike Haines

Despite a turbulent year for many in the restaurant business, a few managed to stand out. One is the group of Clark Cooper Concepts. With The Dunlavy and multiple successful concepts, they are this year's choice in Houston restaurant supremacy. Grant Cooper was raised in Europe and educated in the US and his business

partner and co-founder Chef Charles Clark is a small town Louisiana boy. Together along with chef Brandi Key, they have formed a formidable team pumping out multiple concepts that are unique in many ways. Late last year with the opening of The Dunlavy this group's efforts warrants them as Intown's top restaurateurs.

### How did you two begin your partnership?

**Grant Cooper:** Charles and I have been friends for 30 years. We both had a passion for food, the restaurant business and the dining experience, so we decided to get into the business together and opened Ibiza Food & Wine Bar in 2001.

### Can you tell us about Ibiza, which is your original venture?

**Grant Cooper & Charles Clark:** Ibiza was our first restaurant under the Clark Cooper Concepts umbrella. We started Ibiza 2001 and based it off of the "cheers factor." We wanted to create a restaurant where everyone felt at home when they came into the restaurant. We wanted everyone to come in and feel comfortable, with the wine, the style of service, the style of food. We wanted to place a bottle of wine on every table. So we set our wine prices slightly above retail and this allowed us to offer guests a good, affordable bottle of wine and a chef driven culinary experience.

Ibiza is the foundation that all the other concepts have evolved from—the retail wine, the unpretentious service, and consistent, chef driven food. The "cheers factor" is how we want to run our restaurants. We want them to be the neighborhood hangout. We want to get to know the people on a one-on-one basis and that separates us because we have seen our customers' families grow. We see their kids when they are born and when they graduate college. We have generations going to our restaurants. It is just good food, professional unpretentious service with good wine prices.

### It was Brasserie 19 that really catapulted your operation. What do you attribute to its early success?

**GC:** Ibiza was our first success which allowed us to find such a wonderful group of customers and people that love Brasserie 19. The style of service and mentality behind Brasserie was all based off of Ibiza. The style and quality of food, the concept, the location, and the service all allowed us to find

tremendous success. The reason it was such a success right off the bat was the reputation that we built at Ibiza. We wouldn't have been able to find success at Brasserie without what we've done at Ibiza and the relationships we built with our customers there.

### What was the inspiration behind your newest The Dunlavy?

**GC:** We always dreamed of doing a restaurant full of chandeliers, but just needed to find the perfect space for it. When we partnered with the Buffalo Bayou Partnership to create a restaurant and special event space in the middle of the park, when knew that this was the space for the chandelier restaurant we had been dreaming about for so many years.

There are 43 chandeliers throughout the restaurant and my wife, Jacy and I worked on finding them with a "picker" over a two-year period. The "picker" traveled throughout Italy and France to find all of the chandeliers.

By bringing in so many chandeliers, we were trying to create a feeling of crystal-accented elegance that juxtaposed the surroundings of Buffalo Bayou. Whether guests visit The Dunlavy for a private event or for a brunch in a beautiful glass tree house they notice the floating chandeliers and feeling of relaxed elegance we were trying to achieve with the space.

**You have opened a number of different concepts but none to date have multiple locations. Is that your format going forward or do you have expansion plans for any of your restaurants?**

**GC:** The idea is that we like to create concepts where we find our passion. We create concepts that we know are a good fit for the community in Houston. Our existing concepts are unique in their own way, but we are working on other concepts that have the ability to branch out into multiple locations. We like to do chef driven one-off restaurants, but consider concepts that could potentially branch out into multiple locations.

**Some of your key people came from Pappas. Is it something about their business model you admire or was it about finding the right person.**

**GC:** We have a great admiration and respect for Pappas, but our business model is based off personality and the right fit. We curate our team based on how they fit into our company personality. We've developed a team of people that are able to achieve our goals as individual restaurants and as a group.

**Tell us about Punk's. How did that concept and name come about?**

**CC:** When I was a kid, Punk was my nickname growing up. We were throwing names when opening the restaurant and somehow Punk came up and it stuck.



*Brasserie 19's Beef Carpaccio  
Photo courtesy of Debora Smail*

**“We like to create concepts where we find our passion. We create concepts that we know are a good fit for the community in Houston.”**

**Salt Air has recently opened for lunch and brunch. What are the challenges for operating a high-end seafood restaurant?**

**GC & CC:** Obviously, operating a high-end seafood restaurant requires us to bring in the freshest product available. While we are close to the gulf, we try to not only offer Gulf Coast Seafood, so we import seafood from other regions. We do not really view it as a challenge to get the best product possible, we view it as more of an opportunity to impress our customers with our ability to introduce them to a new, original approach to seafood in a different style seafood setting than you will find anywhere else in Houston.

**Anything else in the pipeline that you would like to share favorites and they are all probably worth the visit!**

**GC & CC:** Nothing that we can share intimately, but we are always working on 3 or 4 concepts. We like to have concepts that are about 75% done and then once the opportunity arises we can move forward and launch. We don't like to talk until it is a done deal.



*SaltAir Seafood Kitchen Crabcake Benedict*

# BANDS BEADS AND BUGS

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