

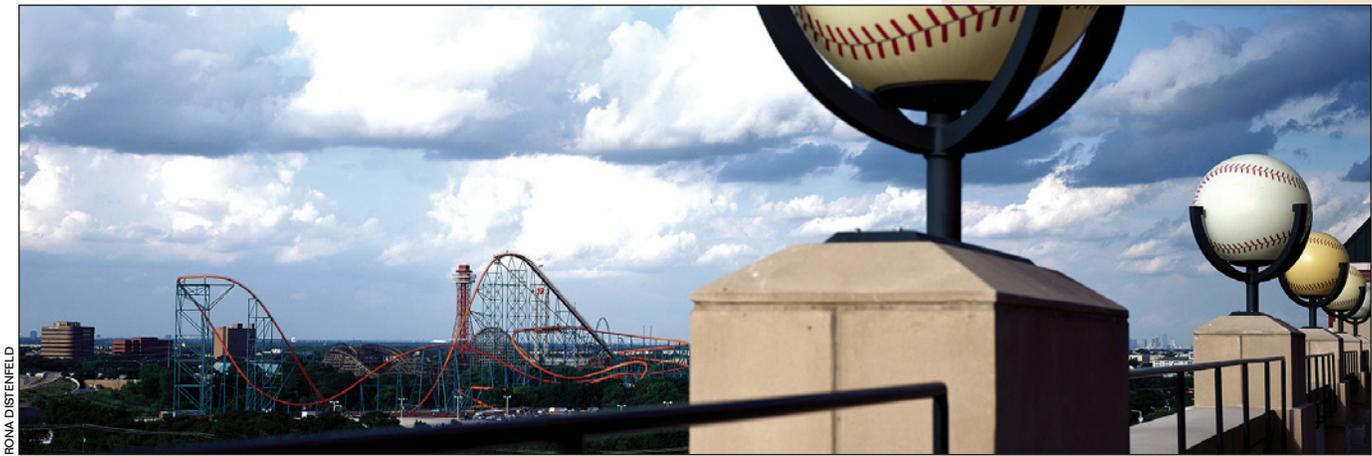


*By Rona Distenfeld*

# *Hit the **Highlights** of the **Metroplex** With a Pro*

*Two years ago Kevin Mench  
was an Oklahoma Redhawk.*

*Now he's a Texas Ranger and an expert  
on the Dallas-Fort Worth area.*



RONA DISTENFELD

**I**N THE TWO YEARS since leaving Oklahoma, outfielder Kevin Mench has used his time well, bringing his batting average to .320 and finding 10 top metro favorites.

Next time you're in Dallas, Arlington or Fort Worth, pay a visit to some of these places—maybe you'll see him there.

### 1. THE BALLPARK IN ARLINGTON

It's no surprise that the Ballpark tops his list. "It's my home and the best place to play baseball," said Mench. The Ballpark celebrates its 10th anniversary this year, but it hasn't rested on its laurels. Last year, players got a new clubhouse—paneled in cherry wood. Go for a game or take a tour, and you'll see why Mench likes his work place.



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### 2. THE LEGENDS OF THE GAME MUSEUM (ARLINGTON)

This interactive museum is more than a display of baseball memorabilia. When you're done viewing the old uniforms, gloves and photos of teams from baseball's early days, head upstairs. Here you can play catcher to Nolan Ryan or test your knowledge of history, science, math and much more. The computer-based games can be adjusted for all skill levels, making it as much fun for kids as for adults.

### 3. AMERICAN AIRLINES CENTER (DALLAS)

This new arena is home to the NBA's Dallas Mavericks, NHL's Stars and AFL's Desperados. "I love hockey," said Mench, "and this is a great place to watch the game. It has a great atmosphere." The Big 12 basketball tournament was held here in 2003 and 2004, and it will host the NCAA Finals in 2006. Maybe the eight-

sided scoreboard is what makes it so popular for sporting events.

It's also quickly becoming a favorite venue for touring acts from Beyonce to Bette Midler, the circus, Disney on Ice and many other events. The capacity is 20,000 (including eight suites you can rent for the night), and there isn't a bad seat in the house.

### 4. STEEL RESTAURANT (DALLAS)

"This is my favorite sushi place," said Mench. "It has excellent food and a good atmosphere. I can really relax here and enjoy the food." You will, too. Steel describes itself as Indo-Chin cuisine, but if that leaves you scratching your head, just try the Vietnamese shaken beef sauteed tenderloin. Elegant, tasty morsels practically melt in your mouth. If you prefer seafood, try the miso sea bass. A large portion of this flavorful fish is marinated 24 hours before being baked to perfection. Most dinner entrees are available at lunch, and the Bantu Box lunch offers a full meal (California roll, salad, egg roll, Japanese pickles and your choice of



TEXAS FOOD AT HOME ON THE RANGE

## Before You Go

- **American Airlines Center**, 2500 Victory Ave., Dallas: (214) 665-4217; [www.americanairlinescenter.com](http://www.americanairlinescenter.com)
- **Ballpark in Arlington**: (817) 273-5222; <http://museum.texasrangers.com>
- **Hurricane Harbor—A Six Flags park**: (817) 263-3356; [www.sixflags.com](http://www.sixflags.com)
- **Javier's Gourmet Mexicano**, 4912 Cole Ave., Dallas: (214) 521-4211; [www.javiers.net](http://www.javiers.net)
- **Legends of the Game**: (817) 273-5600; <http://museum.texasrangers.com>
- **Six Flags Over Texas**: (817) 640-8900; [www.sixflags.com](http://www.sixflags.com)
- **Steel Restaurant and Lounge**, 3102 Oak Lawn Ave., Dallas: (214) 219-9908; [www.steel-dallas.com](http://www.steel-dallas.com)
- **Texas Rangers**: (817) 273-5100; [www.texasrangers.com](http://www.texasrangers.com)
- **The Capital Grille**, 500 Crescent Court, Dallas: (214) 303-0500; [www.thecapitalgrille.com](http://www.thecapitalgrille.com)
- **The Chisolm Club**, 222 Main St., Fort Worth: (817) 210-2222; [www.thechisolmclub.com](http://www.thechisolmclub.com)
- **The Dallas Galleria**, 13355 Noel Road, Dallas: (972) 702-7100; [www.dallasgalleria.com](http://www.dallasgalleria.com)

**The Ballpark in Arlington provides a spectacular view of the thrilling rides at Six Flags Over Texas (top). The Steel Restaurant in Dallas (center) is one of Mench's favorites. Chef Grady Spears (bottom) brings a Texas flair to his offerings at the Chisolm Club in Fort Worth.**

**Dallas' new American Airlines Center is home to great sporting events, concerts and much more.**

main dish) for \$15. Steel is also one of the few places you'll find speciality cocktails made with shochu, the latest trend. Or have a private dinner in the wine room surrounded by more than 400 bottles.

## **5. CHISOLM CLUB (FORT WORTH)**

Mench thinks this popular restaurant has superb steaks and a great atmosphere—I think you'll agree. Voted best place to see a celebrity by Fort Worth Magazine in 2003, this is a cool date spot. Chef Grady Spears' Texas roots show up in dishes such as Dr Pepper-marinated skirt steak tostadas, prime dry-aged beef ribeye with buttermilk onion rings and barbecued quail with smoked onion grits. Every Sunday, all 170 bottles of wine are half-price. You can even take a



cooking class and learn how to prepare everything from game to desserts.

## **6. JAVIER'S (DALLAS)**

Forget everything you think you know about Mexican food. When Javier opened this Dallas landmark in 1977, he was determined to bring authentic Mexico City cuisine to north Texas. The food owes its influence to the Aztecs and Europeans from the days of Cortez. Is it good? You won't get in on weekends

without a reservation. Javier's also boasts a large, comfortable cigar bar. Roomy club chairs and a full bar make this a popular place to relax, talk and enjoy a fine smoke. The rest of the restaurant is smoke-free.

## **7. SIX FLAGS OVER TEXAS (ARLINGTON)**

"They have the biggest roller coaster in the Southwest," said Mench. "It's a good place to have fun." There's something for everyone—tree-shaded walkways, a kids' park, virtual reality games, a Wild West show and more than 100 rides and attractions on 212 acres.

## **8. HURRICANE HARBOR (ARLINGTON)**

"This is a great place to cool down from the Texas heat," said Mench. Ride the surf at Boogie Beach, float around the park on the Lazy River or sit back while the kids play at Hook's Lagoon.

This water park is a favorite summer spot for all ages.

## **9. THE GALLERIA (NORTH DALLAS)**

“Everything you need is here,” said Mench, and he’s right. In three levels of shopping under a dramatic glass barrel vault atrium, you’ll find Nordstrom, Macy’s, Saks Fifth Avenue, Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Cartier, Tiffany & Co., Gianni Versace, MaxMara and nearly 200 more world-class stores. A luxury hotel, ice rink and 28 restaurants and eateries make the Galleria a complete urban marketplace.

## **10. CAPITAL GRILLE (DALLAS)**

“This is one of the nicest places I’ve eaten,” said Mench. “It has great steaks and wine.” It’s a popular power-lunch spot known for its 22-ounce bone-in rib-eye steaks and Stoli-Doli martinis. ■

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*RONA DISTENFELD is a freelance writer and baseball aficionado, residing in Austin, Texas.*