

**PAULA BIEHLER** Principal, Biehler & Associates Did you know that renowned mixologist Junior Merino created the delicious concoctions at La Condesa or that Max's Wine Dive's new Austin location brings fried chicken and champagne together in a way that makes total sense? It's the business of Paula Biehler that you find out. Biehler began her restaurant public relations firm almost 10 years ago, when Austin's dining scene wasn't anything close to what it is today. It all started when Paula's sister Susie (one of her eight siblings), started a restaurant PR business in San Francisco, and Paula would fly out to help her with events. After dining at some of San Fran's best restaurants, Paula really fell in love with food. And since she launched her business here, she has worked with just about every notable restaurant in Austin, landing national press attention for many of her clients. She is currently planning for the opening of Max's and the Carillon (at the AT&T Conference Center), as well as handling a few creative projects like the release of photographer Wyatt McSpadden's Texas *BBQ*. Of the current direction of Austin's dining scene, Biehler says, "Chefs are relying more on local farmers, restaurant design is playing a stronger role, and the up-and-coming restaurateurs are smart operators." She says the most successful restaurants in Austin are offering modern, upscale cuisine in a relaxed but hip atmosphere, but she can't picture our city without its great *dives*. And we can't imagine local foodies without their number one fan. *L. Ford*



What's your idea of a perfect meal? Prosciutto pizza with an egg. Croquette Maudieu with an egg. Huevos rancheros. Notice the common denominator? If you weren't in your current career, what else would you try? I would have loved to be an artist. I grew up drawing birds and trees and nature. Then totally got into nudes. I'm fascinated with human anatomy. I took several classes in my twenties—fell in love with charcoal drawing and sculpture. What smell makes you nostalgic? Gardenias. My mother would cut them from the garden and float them in crystal bowls for the Sunday dinner table. If you were a kitchen appliance, what would you be? An espresso machine. Where would I be without my lattes and cappuccinos? Who has been the biggest influence on your life? My mother and father. They raised nine great kids. My father always said if your life's priorities are in order—that being family first above all—everything else will follow. He was also a fantastic multi-tasker. And of course when all else fails, have a sense of humor. Mom's lessons come every day—the value of having a grateful and generous heart, whether it be family or community, how easy it is to forgive (don't let the small stuff get you down), and how important it is to learn something new every day. What is one thing people don't generally know about you? That I have three terrific sons: a pro golfer, a college baseball player, and a UT frat boy who's law school bound. When and where are you happiest? Traveling internationally, days on the beach, time with my kids. Who are your fantasy dinner party guests? Gourmet editor and author Ruth Reichel, for obvious reasons. Ernest Hemingway, so we can share stories of Spain. Jermaine from *Flight of the Conchords* because he's hot and goofy. Ellen DeGeneres makes me laugh, and she'd get everyone dancing. Oh, and I'd have to invite a few of my own peeps, too.

Photography by Michael Chad Carter