

Delicious Decor

Local designers and patrons decorate tables, fight AIDS



STAFF PHOTOS: ALLISON SLOMOWITZ

Several dozen local designers created tables for Dining By Design. (Above, center) Designer David Nelson sits at his table, which featured a coral centerpiece.

By Kristiana Heap
Society Editor

Everyone thinks they can throw a dinner party, but it can get tricky when you're doing it alongside several dozen of the area's top designers.

Major players in the Dallas design industry came together recently for a culinary extravaganza that was months in the making, but they made it look effortless.

During one week in late June, the Design Industries Foundation Fighting AIDS, known as DIFFA, put on a three-part fête to raise money for AIDS organizations. Although in its 10th year nationally, this is only the second year of Dining

By Design, a collection of intimate tables decorated by local designers.

"I've been wanting it for at least five or six years, and now that I'm on the national board of DIFFA, I was begging them, please let us do this," said Donna Fishel, who brought the event to Dallas last year. "This year, the designers just really got it. It's not just tabletops, it's an entire environment."

Designers are sponsored by philanthropists or fund the tables themselves, and the completed tables are showcased alongside each other at preview parties and are ultimately dined upon at the closing night gala.

"It's nice to go from one vignette to the next as you wander through the settings,"

table designer Eddie Nunns said. "I think it's a great showcase for talents as well as a great cause. This being the second year, there was a lot of nice variety."

Nunns, who is the vice president of creative services for Neiman Marcus Direct, designed what he described as an "organic chic" table that featured bales of hay as table supports and juxtaposed fine crystal with tin cans.

Like Nunns, photo stylist David Nelson focused on natural elements for his table design. His collection of coral from the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show served as the table's centerpiece, which gave the elegant setting a more relaxed feel.

"I came up with the idea of

being on the beach under a cabana tent," he said. "At the end of the day I thought it was like Playa del Carmen ... you could have dinner for 10 under the stars."

"You know, everybody is so over the top for that event, I thought instead of trying to one-up everyone, I went the other way," Nelson said.

Table sponsor and designer Mary Ann Thompson-Frenk, who grew up in Highland Park, had one of the more extravagant table designs, complete with white feathers and ornate decorations; she even sculpted a table for the event that contains reference to the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Toltecs, and Buddhism. +

See DECOR, Page 3C