

Stephan Pyles hopes for a stampede of diners

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This weekend kicks off a series of pre-opening events for the much-anticipated Stampede 66 from celebrity chef [Stephan Pyles](#). It's been three years since Pyles opened a new restaurant, and Stampede 66 is like "returning home," Pyles said.

"It's all things Texas," Pyles said. "It's a concept and an idea that I'm really familiar with and have done before. At the same time, because I have done this, it has to be something really different. For the folks who can still remember Star Canyon — and there are a lot of them out there — I call this a modern, digital Star Canyon."

The menu, specifically the restaurant's margarita and taco bar, will feature such classics as beef brisket tacos, but Pyles also will try out a foie gras and crispy sweetbread taco. The roughly 7,000-square-foot, \$2.5 million Stampede 66 will open its doors Oct. 29 on the ground floor of [Granite Properties'](#) Park Seventeen building.

Pyles spoke with the *Dallas Business Journal's* [Steven R. Thompson](#) about the new concept, the Dallas dining scene and the biggest mistake chefs make opening a restaurant.

What dish are you most excited about at Stampede 66?

There are not going to be appetizers, entrees and desserts. There are different categories. One of the categories will be bowls. I am doing very classic things like huevos rancheros and then this stew that is politely called 'son of a gun stew.' (Pyles elaborated on the original, less-polite name of the dish, which is how it will appear on the menu.) It's classically with a young cow that they consumed from the inside out, its guts and tongue and heart. We are going to make a veal stew and then incorporate some of these offals to make it interesting and maintain some authenticity. Having come from a truck-stop café in Big Spring, I'm really trying to bring that all together.

Do you think embracing your culture has helped you be successful?

As they say in Texas, 'Dance with the one that brung ya.' And Southwestern cuisine is the one that brung me. That's how I got my notoriety. When I have tried to do other concepts, they have been less successful. Samar being the exception, because that is anything but Texan. But I just really wanted to do something that was reflective of my travels and what I liked eating.

It's been three years since you opened Samar by [Stephan Pyles](#); how has the Dallas dining scene changed?

In the last three years, my God, we saw the recession. I joke and say the measure of success of a restaurant today is if you are still open. We were hit with a 20 percent decrease in sales. And we opened Samar at the height of the recession. I think for the concept that it was, it made sense. I would hate to have been opening a fine-dining restaurant at that time. What's happened now is that there is a real optimism in the market.



Jake Doan

Stephan Pyles: Dallas' celebrity chef readies to open Stampede 66 at the Park Seventeen building.

What is the biggest misstep chefs make when opening their own restaurant?

I think most young chefs have an idea that they need to cook and be creative and here's how I'm going to magically do it, but they don't realize that there is a cost decision associated with every decision that they make in the restaurant. My restaurants, we are so attuned to the business side of it, it's almost like a university. People that come here, it's tough work, but they are held responsible for their numbers and figures. I'm still amazed when people interview with me and I'll ask them about labor and food and they say 'Well, we really weren't given that information.' And I think that's more typical than not.

Do you get offers all the time to open new restaurants?

Yeah, but the offers are usually, 'Come open a restaurant. We'll give you a little finish-out. Wouldn't you like to be in our space?' Well, no, I wouldn't. There is only so much equity in the brand. You have to do it slowly. Everyone wants to use the name, but there's a real sense of quality control that comes with that. And you can't do that if you open four restaurants a year.

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