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Wine & Food Foundation Welcomes New President – J. Buckner Hightower –by Rebecca Robinson

One might define Buckner Hightower as perhaps the quintessential renaissance man. Businessman, entrepreneur, restaurateur, and visionary who is well-read, likes to cook and a man who knows his wine. In addition, like any good Foundation President worth his salt, he is committed to and passionate about excellence in wine and food...

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A Taste of Texas in the Big Apple

by Rona Distenfeld

Ask any two Texans where to find the best barbecue and you'll get an argument. Ask them which state has the best barbecue and they'll agree: hands down, it's right here in the Lone Star State. Chili might be our official state dish, but it's our barbecue that we hold dear to our hearts....

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by Drew Hendricks

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by Tessa Cooper



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A Taste of Texas in the Big Apple

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A Taste of Texas in the Big Apple

by Rona Distenfeld

A Taste of Texas in the Big Apple

Ask any two Texans where to find the best barbecue and you'll get an argument. Ask them which state has the best barbecue and they'll agree: hands down, it's right here in the Lone Star State. Chili might be our official state dish, but it's our barbecue that we hold dear to our hearts.

For all its variations, Texas barbecue is definitely unique in taste, style, and experience. Whether you favor spicy or mild sausage, tender brisket, or ribs (pork or beef), Texas has some of the best, and the Hill Country boasts more than its share of places that have earned fame and loyal fans.

At real Texas barbecue joints, it's all about the meat, usually served in butcher paper with paper plates, plastic forks, and a very limited selection of sides. Now this tradition of taste and experience has found its way north, all the way to New York City.

A Childhood Dream Made Real

Entrepreneur Marc Glosserman is not from Texas, and he never planned to own a restaurant. However, his family on both sides was from Texas, going back four generations, so as a child Glosserman spent almost every holiday in Lockhart. The tastes and smells of Kreuz Market were part of that childhood.

"Barbecue, Blue Bell ice cream, and Big Red soda were all part of my childhood," Glosserman recalls. "I had this vague idea about someday opening a restaurant that would offer all these things in the D.C. area, where we lived, but it was never really a plan." Instead he started companies in the telecommunications and health care fields, lived and worked in London for a while, then spent six months traveling the world. That made him want to reconnect with his roots, so he returned to the states.

During a visit to Lockhart for a cousin's wedding, Glosserman had a conversation with Rick Schmidt, owner of Kreuz Market. He knew he wanted to share his memories and his roots with others. He was planning to move to New York, and the idea of bringing Texas barbecue to a foodie capital appealed to him. He put together a business plan, and three and half years later, the restaurant is a reality.



Real Taste all the Way from Texas

Training the staff was just the first part. To get that real Texas taste, Glosserman had his smokers and the post oak wood that fires them shipped all the way from Lockhart. While he buys his top quality meat from local purveyors (except for the sausage, which comes from Kreuz), other menu items, such as the Blue Bell ice cream and Big Red Soda, are Texas imports.

The menu features all the classic barbecue joint favorites--brisket, ribs (pork and beef), and sausage. There are also Beer Braised Cowboy Pinto Beans, green bean casserole, cole slaw, potato salad, jalapeno peppers, white bread, and cobbler to make any Texan feel at home.

Then the menu goes a bit further, with Elizabeth Karmel's own chili recipe, mac and cheese, shoepeg cornbread, Beer Can Game Hen, Market Chicken and other specialty goodies. Desserts include Ancho Chile Cherry Brownies, PB&J Cupcakes, and Bourbon Pecan Pie.

Over at the bar, Hill Country offers more than a dozen beers, although for now only Lone Star is from Texas. "We really wanted to open with Shiner Bock," says Glosserman. "The problem was with the distribution, so we're just going to have to wait for that and for Pearl's until we can get someone to distribute them up here."

The bar also offers Tito's Handmade Vodka, which is featured in a number of specialty drinks. Try an 8-Layer Dip, a Hill Country Cooler, or a Chili Cherry Chocolate Martini and you'll be drinking Tito's.



Real Hill Country Barbecue at 26th and Broadway

Hill Country Barbecue & Market officially opened in June, but before the renovations were even complete the barbecue was reminding visiting Texans of home. Dale Watson (official Texas State Musician for 2007) and his Lonestars played a private event there May 18. "The guys all agreed that was some of the best barbecue we'd had anywhere," says Don Pawlak, the band's pedal steel player.

To get that real Texas taste, Glosserman hired Executive Chef Elizabeth Karmel and Pitmaster Robbie Richter. Karmel had been teaching a barbecue class at the Institute for Culinary Education that was so popular it was full a year out. Glosserman called her, showed her his business plan, and she was sold. Even though she's from North Carolina, she was compelled by Glosserman's desire to create a restaurant that honored his roots as authentically as possible. Soon, she decided to learn how they do it in Texas.

"She liked that I was willing to do what it takes to get it right," says Glosserman. "I wanted to do my best take on Texas, and that meant focusing on more than just the meat. I had to provide the whole experience, right down to the butcher paper."

Meanwhile, Richter was garnering kudos for his barbecue skills. A friend of a friend of a friend, who had started the Barbecue NYC event, told Glosserman about Richter, who was heavily into the competitive scene at the time. Barbecue was his calling, and he was immediately interested in Glosserman's idea.

Having rounded up his crew and investors, Glosserman took the next key step; he sent his team to Central Texas to learn about real barbecue. "They went to all the great places," says Glosserman. "Cooper's in Llano, Southside Market in Elgin, the Salt Lick, Kreuz Market, everywhere. And Robbie spent a week training with the folks at Kreuz."

Wine? Well, it is NYC.

Few, if any, barbecue joints in Texas offer wine. But this is New York, and Glosserman wanted to showcase all the great tastes of Texas that he could. "I don't think many New Yorkers realize that Texas even has a wine industry, even though it's the largest viticulture region in the U.S.," says Glosserman. "I wanted to introduce that to New York, so our wine list features Texas wines exclusively, except for sparkling wines, which I had to get elsewhere."

Working with local wine expert Wes Marshall, Glosserman developed a list that includes wines from Fall Creek, Becker, Texas Hills, Flat Creek, Llano Estacado, and St. Genevieve. He expects the list to grow over time to include other Texas wineries.

Glosserman also hopes to offer other Texas products. Pecans, pickles and preserves are on his short list, and he is open to ideas for other retail products.

Don't Forget to Dance

Texas music is as much a part of the culture Glosserman wants to share as is the food. He opened Hill Country with performances by Heybale, a Continental Club fixture in Austin, and he plans to have live music two to three nights a week.

"I love the Austin music scene," says Glosserman. "Having Dale Watson play here before we were even open was great. I'm also a big fan of Rob Schneider and the blues, so we plan to bring a mix of Austin music here."

The restaurant, which seats 250 people on two floors, includes a stage in the lower seating area. Picnic style tables can be moved around to make room for dancing on the concrete floor.

Authentic Texas food, drink, and music. What more could NYC ask for?

When You Go:

Hill Country Barbecue & Market
30 West 26th Street
(between 6th Avenue and Broadway)
(212) 255-4544

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