

Submitted by Joyce Smith

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New BBQ and Orange County Choppers now at the Legends



Backfire BBQ

To take on Kansas City barbecue — and succeed — you'd better be prepared. The new Backfire BBQ Featuring Orange County Choppers spent three years in development before it tried.

The new restaurant/retail shop/attraction kicks off with a grand opening today in the Legends at Village West in Kansas City, Kan.

So chow down and let the barbecue debate begin.

"Backfire BBQ is bikes, burgers and barbecue. And it is a phenomenal collection of antique cars, antique jukeboxes, phenomenal neon signs," said Steve Schussler, creator of Backfire BBQ as well as T-Rex Cafe, also in the Legends at Village West, and Rainforest Café, among other concepts.

"We have some of the most unusual décor that you will see in Kansas City and what you don't see, which is behind the scenes, is one of the world's largest smokers."

It takes great food, great atmosphere, and even entertainment to be competitive in the restaurant industry these days. While theme operations took off in the 1990s, more often than not the chow couldn't begin to compare with the décor.



S'mores pit

So Backfire BBQ has gone full throttle, developing a menu under the culinary direction of Chicago's Levy Restaurants, which oversees such award-winning restaurants as Spiaggia and Bistro 110 in that city.

"We spent a whole year testing food in their laboratories. So it is more about the food than the décor," Schussler said. "You can't think that your taste buds are going to be overwhelmed by the décor."

The 8,300-square-foot operation at 1855 Village West Parkway (just 20 yards from T-Rex) seats 300 people amid custom-built choppers by Orange County Choppers, an open flame "hog pit," 14 plasma televisions, and artwork. It also will have live music Thursday through Saturday nights.

Behind the scenes everything but the chocolate cake is made in-house including the pickles, salad dressings, barbecue sauces, donuts (made to order and tossed tableside in cinnamon and sugar), apple cobbler, and fried green tomatoes. Backfire BBQ uses organic and local when possible.

Other menu items include chipotle deviled eggs, spiced barbecue shrimp, chili, a variety of burgers, meatloaf, salads, steak, catfish, and, of course, barbecue — ribs, brisket, pulled pork, and chicken — all cranked up on a smoker with a 1,400-pound capacity.

Then there's the S'mores pit on the outdoor patio that a group of women turned into a place to smoke and drink wine Sunday night at the soft opening. Meanwhile, passersby gawked at the outdoor cycle displays and many, with jaws agape, peeked into the windows to see even more.

"The brisket was absolutely to die for," said Chuck Ramirez of Lee's Summit, who dug in with his wife and daughter, then hit the S'mores pit for dessert.

Tonight, Paul Teutul Sr., chief executive officer of Orange County Choppers, and his two sons will make an appearance for the grand opening. The stars of the television series plan to stop several times a year at events.

Schussler chose the barbecue and bikes combination because they remind him of the freedom of the open road.

"We're in a barbecue town and we said to ourselves 'okay, dare we open up barbecue in a barbecue town,' " he said. "The only way that you can do barbecue in a barbecue town — and a town that's done barbecue well — is to be better. And we are so confident, not cocky confident mind you, but we are so confident in our barbecue that I dare anybody to come in and not have our brisket melt in your mouth, our ribs fall off the bone."

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