

Dining Notes: Monroe's Smokehouse Bar-B-Q opens second Jacksonville location

It's a busy time for Jacksonville's barbecue restaurant business.

- On Thursday, Texas-based **Dickey's Barbecue Pit** opened its first Jacksonville restaurant in Mandarin at 9825 San Jose Blvd.
- **4 Bones Barbecue** is under construction and expected to open in the coming weeks at 14286 Beach Blvd.
- **4 Rivers Smokehouse**, a popular Central Florida-based restaurant, announced in October its plans to open a new location in Jacksonville next spring at 9220 Baymeadows Road.
- Jacksonville's **Mojo Bar-B-Q** opened its fifth restaurant, **Mojo Old City BBQ**, in St. Augustine in July.

And **Monroe's Smokehouse Bar-B-Q** opened just last week on Jacksonville's Southside, at 10771 Beach Blvd., in the former **Woody's Bar-B-Q** spot that closed a year ago.

It's the second location for owner **Keith Waller**, who opened his first Monroe's five years ago on the Westside at 4838 Highway Ave.

Tucked away in a mostly industrial area north of Interstate 10 near Cassat Avenue, the restaurant has a dedicated following.

But since Waller launched **Monroe's-On-The-Go**, a mobile kitchen, in March 2011, he's expanded his barbecue brand to Jacksonville's downtown and Southside, where he normally operates two and three days a week, respectively.

And that's where he's chosen to locate his new restaurant.

The extensive interior renovation offers a dining area with picnic bench-style seating, complete with a roll of paper towels and Monroe's four signature sauces: Mustard, Hot Mustard, Monroe Sauce and Sweet Sauce.

Painted wood-paneled walls, some covered in tin roofing, sport old and antique kitchen utensils, cola signs and bottle crates, western-themed decorations and more.

On the menu, look for the following:

Platters (Lunch, \$8.99 to \$9.99; Dinner, \$11.99 to \$12.99): Pulled Pork, Carolina Pork, Beef Brisket, Turkey Breast, Chicken or Spare Ribs; served with choice of two sides from 12 options.

Sandwiches (\$7.95 to \$9.95): Pulled Pork, Chopped Carolina Pork, Sliced Turkey, Pulled Chicken or Chopped Beef Brisket.

Wings meals (\$5.95 to \$13.99): Choose from Dry, Wet Mild or Wet Chipotle flavors.

Appetizers include Mamie's Sweet Potato Fries (\$4.95), Mary's Sweet Corn Nuggets (\$5.75), Pa's Deep Fried Okra (\$4.95), Wade's Famous Wings (\$4.25/\$7.99) and more.

And be sure to check out the dessert case before taking your seat. You'll want to save room for Monroe's Banana Pudding Pie, Red Velvet Cake and other homemade goodies.

Wash it down with draft beer selections from Jacksonville Beach's **Green Room Brewing** and Riverside's **Bold City Brewery**. Or choose from a selection of bottled sodas, including RC Cola, A&W Root Beer, Boylan's Black Cherry, Peach Nehi, Cheerwine and others.

Monroe's is open 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., Monday through Saturday; and 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Sunday.

Note: If you missed Thursday's column, you can read about Dickey's Barbecue Pit and 4 Bones Barbecue online at jacksonville.com/diningnotes.

New Loop location really is a NEW look

When **The Loop Pizza Grill** opens its new restaurant today at the St. Johns Town Center, it won't just be a new Loop — it will be a “new” Loop.

The restaurant, located at 4413 Town Center Parkway next to Total Wine in the Publix-anchored St. Johns Town Center North, is the Loop's new prototype restaurant, one that will serve as a model for future locations of the Jacksonville-based chain founded more than 30 years ago by **Terry Schneider** and **Mike Schneider**.

Terry Schneider describes the restaurant as “a funky, burger brasserie” and “a space not only for dining, but meeting, drinking and enjoying life.”

She, along with daughter **Hillary Tuttle**, worked with Designmind's **Rebecca Davisson** to create the Loop's new "warehouse-style" look that includes exposed iron beams, large windows, industrial lighting and a 50-foot mural by local artist **Steve Williams**.

But though the Loop's look and feel have changed, its menu hasn't. You'll still find all of your favorite salads, burgers and pizzas — as well as its signature hand-dipped shakes.

The Loop will be open daily, from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Look for more on the new restaurant in an upcoming column.

Chef Tom Gray departs Bistro Aix for new venture

Late last week, **Bistro Aix** made a big announcement in an emailed newsletter to patrons on its mailing list: The promotion of **Zeke Mears** to executive chef.

For many, though, the bigger news is that founding partner and executive chef **Tom Gray** is moving on to pursue a new opportunity: the building and opening of his own restaurant at St. Johns Town Center.

Mears has worked with Gray for more than a decade at Bistro Aix.

[More on Gray's departure and future plans](#). And look for more on Mears in an upcoming column.

More news from the kitchen: Azurea announced this week the promotion to executive sous chef of **Geoffrey Gable**, a graduate of The Art Institute of Philadelphia with more than a decade of experience, including stints at Ritz-Carlton properties in Orlando and Philadelphia as well as The Cloister at Sea Island, Ga.

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