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Exclusive: Why this Portland pub is building its first Texas location at the Music Factory

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Korri Kezar Staff Writer Dallas Business Journal



Thirsty Lion Gastropub & Grill is building its first Texas location in Irving's Music Factory development, hoping to draw crowds from the area's outdoor amphitheater, convention center, hotel and other entertainment

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John Plew

The Portland-based concept has eight units in Arizona, Colorado and Oregon, and will open its Irving restaurant in late September. The eatery will encompass 7,700 square feet on indoor space, including a 32-seat bar. It will also feature three patio areas, including one spanning 1,800 square feet with two fire pits, group seating and flat-screen TVs.



VIEW SLIDESHOW 4 photos



The gastropub will include 7,700 square feet of interior space and three outdoor patios.

Like its other restaurants, the Irving spot will feature scratch-made dishes made with local ingredients. Specialties include bronzed salmon and mango quinoa, roasted pork Cubano and bacon-wrapped barbecue prawns.

It will add a Texas flair by stocking 24 local draft beers and wines.

[John Plew](#), founder and CEO of Thirsty Lion's parent company Concept Entertainment Group, said the concept chose to build in Irving because the area lacks full-service restaurant options.

Thirsty Lion will join 20 other eateries and bars, including Boi Na Braza Brazilian Steak House, Cecil's Dining Room and Kabuki Japanese Restaurant, at Music Factory, a 17-acre mixed-use development anchored by The Pavilion, an 8,000-seat indoor/outdoor concert hall, and located near the Irving Convention Center.

Plew told the Dallas Business Journal more about Thirsty Lion, how it plans to draw customers and its continued growth in North Texas.

Why are you opening at the Music Factory?

We have a (growth) strategy for the whole state of Texas that we've been working on for four years. The Music Factory was one of the first developments we had been working on with a variety of others to follow. We like not only the Music Factory itself, but also the market. And with expansive residential growth, it has a shortage of full-service restaurants.

On top of that, you add a cluster of restaurants and a movie theater and outdoor amphitheater with the convention center and now a hotel. We felt it was a great synergy in an area that didn't have those amenities.

Who is your target customer?

We're very active and communal, so it's not a traditional steakhouse that's busy at night. Thirsty Lion is designed to be busy seven days a week, and the demographic changes throughout the day and week. Our core customer is aged between 25 to 50 years old, skewing younger at night and older during lunch. We get a lot of families as well, and with Dallas being a sports market with younger families, we think we'll see families who want better food while they watch a game.

Are you planning additional locations in North Texas?

We have a second location lined up at The Colony at Grandscape. It'll be in the northeast quadrant near [Nebraska Furniture Mart](#). Then we have another location that we're working on with the demolition at Midtown behind the Galleria.

We're not trying to have a restaurant on every corner. Our whole sense of development is about finding quality. We'll probably (build) five, maybe six restaurants over time in Dallas-Fort Worth. We see ourselves downtown or Uptown, and there will be one in Fort Worth. It will depend on the location and timing.