

Business Lunch: Stampede 66

Say howdy to celebrity chef Stephan Pyles' new slightly kitschy, yet delicious spin on the Texas mythos.

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Wild West: Stampede 66's barbeque brisket with potato salad
Kevin Marple

Clad in a wide-brimmed Stetson and spurs that jingle-jangle-jingle, the Texas mystique is a powerful thing. It's romantic and alluring. But it's not really Dallas. Our city was built on banking, not cattle drives. Our landscape is more gleaming skyscrapers than wide open spaces. Sure, you'll find a few local souls into ropin' and ridin'. But you'll find far more into shoppin' and brunchin'.

That's why, on first visit, [Stampede 66](#) is such a yeehaw assault on the senses: cowhide club chairs, Texas ranch scenes on TV screens, a wire-coiled rattler snaking through the dining room, and longhorns hanging over the bar. It may sound like a theme park rather than the hottest

restaurant in town. But Stampede 66 pulls it off with good taste and sexy Lone Star State bravado. In other words, check your coat and Dallas preconceptions at the door.

The reason why it all works? Stephan Pyles. The celebrity chef and fifth-generation Texan loves his home state as well as the flavors of the Southwest, a fact evident in his many successful restaurant openings, from Routh Street Cafe to Star Canyon to his eponymous restaurant. But Stampede 66 is his most approachable to date. Pyles and executive chef Jonathan Thompson are serving their guests the food that everyone wants to eat: a soul-warming blend of home cooking and Mexican with a little gourmet flair.

You'll recognize all the dishes on the menu. Fried green tomatoes were stacked with fresh mozzarella and topped with pickled peppers and chowchow foam. Venison meatloaf, so moist it practically crumbled, was served atop a savory tomatillo gravy. Tacos and tamales were far from typical taqueria offerings. The homemade corn tortillas were wonderfully chewy and the tamales sported moist masa and tasty stuffings such as mushroom and adobo chicken. A knife-and-fork burger was smothered in housemade pimento cheese and sat on a cornbread-style bun.

But Stampede 66's best and most requested dish is its fried chicken. The succulent meat was injected with honey, giving it a slightly sweet flavor. The bird's crunchy breading was—pardon the cliché—finger-licking good. Served with velvety smooth mashed potato tots and buttermilk biscuits, this was chef

Pyles at his comforting best. With food this fine and an ambience so sincere, you'll soon be charmed by Stampede 66 despite the design clichés. Yeehaw indeed.

Stampede 66

1717 McKinney Ave., Ste. 100. 214-550-6966.

Modern Texan

THE COST: Average lunch entrée price is \$12.

WI-FI: Yes

FULL BAR: Yes

THE POWER TABLE: The high back, clam-shaped banquettes along the southern end offer not only great views but also a more private spot for business conversation.