

Former landmark barbecue restaurant in Oklahoma City will reopen as an Italian eatery

The former home of County Line Barbeque in northeast Oklahoma City is set to reopen this spring as Gabriella's, an Italian restaurant and market run by a family with deep ties to the Krebs culinary scene.

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The former home of County Line Barbeque in northeast Oklahoma City is set to reopen this spring as an Italian restaurant and market run by a family with deep ties to the Krebs culinary scene.

For the past decade, Vicki and Duane Muhs have operated Gabriella's, a top-rated Italian restaurant in South Padre Island, Texas.

Vicki Muhs said she jumped at the chance to open Gabriella's in the historic County Line property at 1220 NE 63 and return, family in tow, to Oklahoma.

“It's time to come back home — we never intended to stay down there for as long as we did,” Vicki Muhs said. “It's an opportunity to bring our family back together and back in Oklahoma.”

Ties to Italy, Krebs

She is proud of her Krebs roots, noting that her family moved from Italy to work in the mines in southeast Oklahoma a century ago.

When her great-grandfather died at age 44, her great-grandmother began serving meals at her home and selling Choc beer. That early-day struggle resulted in the opening of the Isle of Capri, one of the restaurants that has made Krebs a destination throughout the region for those looking for good, authentic Italian food.

Vicki Muhs said she began cooking in the kitchen as a child and was “never told to stay away from the oven.”

Likewise, her son Mike specializes in making Italian sausage from scratch, while daughter Ashton Gabriella, the eatery's namesake, began making brick oven pizzas at age 12. Son Brandon, meanwhile, helps in the restaurant as well and assists with running the office and marketing efforts.

Even reconstruction of the restaurant, originally the Kentucky Club, is a family affair being run by Duane Muhs, who is a contractor. The small rooms that lined both sides of the restaurant are being kept, but the center swath and former bar area have been gutted to provide a more open dining area with a view of the picture windows that show

the downtown skyline and the state Capitol.

A fireplace that was somewhat obscured by the bar area's walls also is more visible. The Muhses also plan to build out an open kitchen with a wide view for patrons.

Seating, meanwhile, is being reduced from 210 to 156.

“We're into quality, not quantity, and into atmosphere,” Duane Muhs said.

The front of the restaurant is being converted into an Italian market, similar to one at the Gabriella's in Texas, that will sell deli and Italian meats, fresh pastas, sauces and bakery items.

While much of the old kitchen setup, including the smokers, was sold at auction, one smoker was kept for Mike Muhs to use for smoking sausages and his special rub recipe, Tuscan ribs.

The Muhses say they plan to open this spring. Duane Muhs insisted it not open until after his wife gets to enjoy Mother's Day at a restaurant where she's not working.



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