

DENVER BUSINESS JOURNAL

Full Plate: Pizza and taco chains expand into Colorado

Here's a roundup of this week's Denver food and drink news.



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Pizza concept expanding to Denver ...

Sarpino's USA, a fast-growing delivery-focused pizza-and-Italian-food restaurant, plans to open its first Colorado location next year in Westminster at 7243 N. Federal Blvd. and then add four more stores in subsequent years throughout the Denver area. The local restaurants will add to a now-50-eatery chain that operates in eight Midwestern and Southern states and will be owned by [Samar Sawaged](#), whose business portfolio has included a burrito restaurant, and [Sid Demirovski](#), a former Sarpino's manager who owns a plumbing business.

Sarpino's offers an extensive menu of more than 60 specialty and gourmet pizzas, such as its Super Taco Pizza baked with chunky taco and pizza sauce, its steak pizza, its BLT Pizza and its alfredo shrimp pizza. It also boasts some 20 calzones and sandwiches, 12 pastas, 11 salads, five bone-in wing flavors, a variety of appetizers and an entire separate vegan menu.

"This agreement marks a significant milestone in our company history as we enter our ninth state and develop our first-ever locations in Colorado," said [David Chatkin](#), president of Sarpino's USA, in a news release. "Denver is an ideal market for Sarpino's USA, with high consumer demand for elevated food options and strong economic growth and development."

... As is a southeastern taco concept

Capital Tacos — a Tampa, Florida-based chain that is expanding quickly after winning several honors from national magazines, will jump the Mississippi River for the first time as it opens three Boulder County locations beginning in 2023 under a new franchise agreement. Father-daughter duo Jason and [Marilyn Scoby](#) will open the fast-casual Tex-Mex eateries in and around Boulder and Longmont.

Capital Tacos offers its flavors in a taco, burrito or bowl, including fajita chicken and bacon in a chipotle BBQ sauce, shaved steak with a three-cheese blend, tiger shrimp in a rice wine vinegar glaze and more traditional offerings like pork carnitas. It also serves appetizers like Mexican street corn and queso bites with dipping sauce, main dishes like monster quesadillas and crazy fries and desserts such as mini churros and traditional Mexican cheesecake.

"Marilyn and I share a deep passion for food, as well as the desire to build something together that's our own," [Jason Scoby](#) said in a news release. "We went on a national search for a restaurant concept dedicated to true innovation and serving uniquely delicious food. That's when we found Capital Tacos, a brand defined by a mission to deliver the most flavorful Tex-Mex out there — a flavor that's truly been lacking here in Colorado for quite some time — and has the track record, guest recognition and awards to back it up."

Unique new café

Denver is getting what its owners call the city's first women- and immigrant-owned, Guatemala-inspired, bilingual café on Monday when Convivio Café opens at 4935 W. 38th Ave., sharing space alongside eclectic art bar Enigma Bazaar. Its owners, coffee retail specialist [Kristin Lacy](#) and immigrant-rights activist [Vivi Lemus](#), will offer fair-trade Guatemalan coffee, flavored lattes and tea.

Food items will include a rotating item of small plates, including Guatemalan enchiladas, tostadas, nachos, pupusas, empanadas and fresh fruit bowls. The café, which will operate 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. every day except for Tuesdays, also will serve Guatemalan

pastries such as alfajores (dulce de leche sandwiches), champurradas (coffee-dunking cookies) and ponche scones (dried fruit and spices), as well as treats from other neighborhood chefs.

Chef in 'Wild' TV competition

[Mason Snyder](#) — a Parker-based private chef who offers catering, private classes and cooking for in-home parties through his business, The Cowboy Chef — added a new role this month on Hulu’s series “Chefs vs. Wild.” Snyder took part in the new cooking competition series, in which two chefs are dropped into the wilderness with a mission to survive and forage enough wild ingredients to cook a five-star meal in a competition determined by a judging panel.

In the Oct. 10 episode, “The World Is Not Your Oyster,” Snyder teamed with survivalist [Dianne Hunter](#) to fish and forage for food along the coast of British Columbia. While Hulu officials didn’t reveal whether Snyder won the competition, the episode overview reported that the former Air Force intelligence analyst “encounters a foraged find that leads him into an unfortunate position.”

Statewide industry group honors

The Colorado Restaurant Association recently announced its lifetime achievement awards and industry spotlight awards. Here’s a look at the Denver-area restaurants and restaurant workers among the host of statewide honorees:

- Colorado Foodservice Hall of Fame inductees: Crafted Concepts (Rioja, Bistro Vendome, etc.) co-owner [Beth Gruitch](#), late restaurateur [Richard Salturelli](#) (partner in eateries like The Cherry Cricket and City Grille) and Stranahan’s Steakhouse Managing Partner [Marc Steron](#);
- Exceptional Newcomer: [Natascha Hess](#) of Ginger Pig;
- Outstanding Professionals: [Dol Bhattarai](#) of Yak & Yeti Restaurants, [Ashley Hoffman](#) of Restaurants of America, [Carlin Karr](#) of Frasca Hospitality Group and [Dana Rodriguez](#) (Work & Class, Super Mega Bien, Cantina Loca);
- Outstanding Philanthropists: [Hosea Rosenberg](#) and [Lauren Feder Rosenberg](#) of Blackbelly and Santo and [Jesusio Silva](#) of the Golden Mill;
- Chef of the Year: [Gabe Wyman](#) of Rioja;
- Front of the House Employees of the Year: [Noah Fields](#) of La Patisserie Francaise and [Bobby Rayburn](#) of Point Easy;
- Legacy Employees: [Jose Alvarado](#) of Wahoo’s Colorado and [Yulita “Lenny” Setiono](#) of Kokoro Restaurant.

Special Food Events

- Luca, at 711 Grant St. in Denver, is offering a special fall dine-in or take-out menu on Wednesday featuring items such as Colorado kale and apple salad, butternut squash agnolotti, butchers' steak with charred rapini and lady finger panna cotta with espresso whipped cream.
- At 6:30 p.m. Thursday, The Bindery, at 1817 Central St. in Denver, will host a \$125/person five-year anniversary dinner with dishes like cocoa-nib-crusteD pork belly, pumpkin tortellini and blood sausage, octopus with black garbanzo beans and fermented black garlic bread.
- Bistro Vendome, at 1420 Larimer St. in Denver, has added a second "Taste of the French Quarter" dinner at 6 p.m. on Nov. 3, in which chef [Jeremy Wolgamott](#) will serve a drink-paired menu that includes shrimp remoulade, Louisiana redfish courtbouillon, New Orleans fried chicken and more.
- Ace Eat Serve, at 501 E. 17th Ave. in Denver, will host a \$30/person Peking Duck dinner on Nov. 8 in which guest chefs will carve the duck tableside as part of a three-course dinner, and proceeds will go to support The Youth Employment Academy.
- Restaurant Olivia, at 290 S. Downing St. in Denver, on Nov. 11-13 will hold its second annual truffle dinner, a \$395/person seven-course feast in which its owners serve black and white truffles they found in Piedmont, Italy, as well as wine and homemade pasta.

Special Halloween Offerings

- Infinite Monkey Theorem, at 3200 Larimer St. in Denver, will offer candy and wine pairings, combining five vino samples with sweets, through Monday. Popular combos include Kit Kat and Cab Franc, caramel apple lollipops with Riesling and Reese's plus Malbec.
- Hops & Pie, at 3920 Tennyson St. in Denver, will hold its Pumpkin Fest on Saturday. The beer-and-pizza restaurant will offer up pumpkin spice donuts and pumpkin soup for the occasion, in addition to pouring beers from breweries across Colorado and the United States.
- The Bindery will spook up its brunch on Saturday and Sunday with monster-looking avocado toasts (egg whites with black olives for eyes, corn chips for hair, bell peppers for ears, etc.), Tres leches French toast, spooky cocktails and pumpkin cream puffs and more from the bakery.

New menus and menu items

- Broomfield-based Noodles & Company (Nasdaq: NDLS) has added plant-based, panko-breaded Impossible Chicken to two dishes after a [six-month test run](#): the

spicy-tomato-creamy-sauce-based LEANguini Rosa with Impossible Chicken and Impossible Orange Chicken Lo Mein.

- Kachina Cantina, at 1890 Wazee St. in Denver, is offering a Dia de los Muertos menu from Friday through Nov. 2 featuring a tofu taco with truffle mayo and lentils, pastor cauliflower steak with grilled pineapple and Morita salsa, seared duck breast with confit duck leg hash and cherry sauce and the Pan de Muerto, with hojandra, whipped requeson and salted cajeta.
- Bezel Denver, at 1550 Court Place, has rolled out new menu items for the fall, including squash fries, butternut squash soup, DuckSceta, short rib ravioli, bone marrow, cherry mascarpone mousse cake, vegan strawberry shortcake and a pumpkin ganache.