

Secrets of 18 Restaurant & Bar Names in Dallas-Fort Worth

By Steven Lindsey | January 11, 2016

When you see signs emblazoned with "Joe's Pizza Joint" or "Johnny's Burger Hut," you pretty much know exactly what you'll find on the menus once inside. But other restaurant owners like a little more mystery and whimsy behind their monikers. Here are 18 of Dallas' most popular spots and how they got their names.



Vivo 53

It's all about the dough at Vivo 53 in downtown Fort Worth. The restaurant draws its name from the 53 attempts and three master bakers it took to create the perfect flavorful pizza dough (pictured above in their spicy sausage pizza). The word "Vivo" means "alive" in Italian. One bite of a crispy slice of pizza and your taste buds will definitely come to life.

525 Taylor St., Fort Worth, 682-207-8700

20 Feet Seafood Joint

The name behind this Lake Highlands seafood spot may seem nautical at first glance, but it's owner Marc Cassel's and wife Suzan Fries' creativity at work instead. At the time they formed the LLC to open the restaurant, they had one cat and four dogs. The total number of feet that represents? Twenty! Cassel gets a kick out of hearing customers in line telling their friends that 20 feet is the ideal depth for catching mahi, swordfish, oysters or any other variety of fish tales.

1160 Peavy Rd., 972-707-7442

Reata

This sophisticated downtown Fort Worth restaurant gets its name from the majestic ranch in the 1950s movie *Giant*, starring James Dean, Rock Hudson and Elizabeth Taylor. A collector's edition of the book *Giant*, by Edna Ferber, is framed in the lobby. Adding to the cowboy theme, the Spanish word "reata" also translates to "rope."

310 Houston St., Fort Worth, 817-336-1009

Five Sixty by Wolfgang Puck

When Wolfgang Puck announced plans to open a restaurant at the top of Reunion Tower, a naming competition was created and more than 15,000 entries were submitted. Seven of those were "Five Sixty," the height of the tower. All seven guests received one free dinner per month for a year, a meet-and-greet with Puck at the opening party, as well as cookware and autographed books.

Reunion Boulevard East, 214-571-5784



There's a familiar face on the walls at both the Fort Worth original and new Cedar Springs location of this restaurant and wine bar—Winslow. The blue heeler mix (pictured above) belongs to co-owner Joe Berry and gets his name from the town of Winslow, Arkansas, near where he acquired the puppy with one blue eye and one brown. The brown and blue color scheme runs through the restaurants as a subtle nod to the four-legged inspiration behind the name.

Multiple locations

Meso Maya

Known for its authentic interior Mexican cuisine, this El Fenix sibling with locations in North Dallas and Victory Park gets its name from the term Mesoamerica, the region between central Mexico and Costa Rica, and Maya, the ancient indigenous people of that area. The menu is anchored by made-from-scratch moles, adobos, salsas and hand-ground tortillas, with histories dating back thousands of years.

Multiple locations

Dugg Burger

This Casa Linda burger joint isn't named after a man, but the method in which they load the burger full of toppings. Using a special tool, a hole is "dugg" out of the top bun, making a cozy nook for loads of fresh toppings, including bacon, fried onions, mushrooms and grilled fresh jalapeños (pictured above). And with cheese and up to 13 toppings included in the price, it's a good thing they thought of that hole.

9540 Garland Rd., 214-584-6261

Asador

Named by the 16-year-old daughter of one of the restaurant's managing partners, this restaurant (pictured above) in the Renaissance Dallas features a menu highlighting open-flame cooking. The word "Asador" refers to either a grill master or the technique of cooking whole meats on an open fire.

2222 Stemmons Fwy., 214-267-4815

Bread Winners

In the early 1990s, Jim and Cindy Hughes were living in Omaha, Nebraska. The newlyweds wanted to be closer to family in Dallas. While they were packing up to start a new life, a friend of theirs told them he was closing down his restaurant, Bread Winners. They loved the name and bought it from their friend for \$1.00 with the intent of one day opening one of their own Bread Winners in Dallas. That dollar investment has yielded multiple locations of the bakery restaurant and Bread Winners is a household name among brunch fanatics all over the metroplex.

Multiple locations



Bowen House

This charming cocktail den and eatery in Uptown gets its name from the history books. In 1861, Tennessee-born Ahab Bowen (1807 - 1900) moved to Dallas, where he was a farmer and feed dealer. He owned and cultivated the surrounding Uptown Dallas area, including this circa 1874 house (pictured above), which was located outside the Dallas city limits at the time of purchase in 1867. The now-historic Ahab Bowen home was converted into a vintage store in 1976 and was owned and operated for 35 years before closing its doors in 2011. Pasha Heidari bought the home and began Bowen House in October 2013.



2614 Boll St., 214-484-1385

Rodeo Goat

The original Fort Worth location of this burger favorite is less than a mile away from the Cowtown Coliseum, an iconic rodeo venue. Back in the day, successful goat wranglers figured out they could make more money by feeding their goats beer. A drunk goat is like a drunk person, happy and uncoordinated, which makes it very easy to rope. From this came the phrase, "drunk as a rodeo goat." So it should come as no surprise that ice-cold beer is as popular as the burgers at the Fort Worth and Dallas locations.

Multiple locations

Victor Tangos

During Prohibition, the code name for a vodka tonic at underground/secret alcohol establishments was "Victor Tango." The name is symbolic of the nondescript windowless building (pictured above) which houses one of the best cocktail dens in the city, known for libations far more creative than its namesake.



3001 North Henderson Ave., 214-252-8595

Abacus

Some names come about from strategy, which is exactly how celebrity chef Kent Rathbun and his partner at the time, Robert Hoffman, landed on Abacus. They hired a graphic design company to present some interesting name options with criteria that included the name being one word with ambiguous meaning that didn't coordinate with a specific type of cuisine or place. And they wanted it to be in the front of the alphabet. Abacus and Onyx were the final two contenders, but nobody could decide. Hoffman was a huge art collector while having lunch with artist Jasper Johns, he explained the situation. Johns said that if it were up to him, he would absolutely choose Abacus. So, they did.

4511 McKinney Ave., 214-559-3111

Jasper's

When Kent Rathbun was ready to name his follow-up restaurant to Abacus, he immediately thought to name it after the artist Jasper Johns, who helped decide upon the first restaurant's name (see above). But there's also a side story tie-in. Rathbun's mother worked at a restaurant called Jasper's when she moved to Kansas City. Though he worried about naming the restaurant the same as the Kansas City eatery, the owner of that spot only has praise for the chef's accomplishments. Not to mention the fact that he attributes a lot of his business to people thinking his Jasper's is one of Rathbun's.

7161 Bishop Rd., Plano, 469-229-9111

CiboDivino

In Italian, CiboDivino means “divine food” which perfectly describes the Oak Cliff market, restaurant and wine bar in West Dallas' Sylvan Thirty complex. Pronounced "cheebo," the name also represents husband and wife team Christina and Daniele Puelo (pictured above). The “C” in Cibo stands for Christina and the “D” in Divino for Daniele), which is why the name forms one word — so they are always together. How romantic!

1868 Sylvan Ave., 214-653-2426



Madrina

The name was discussed for weeks on end by the team behind hotspot Proof + Pantry before opening this French-influenced Mexican restaurant in Highland Park. “Madrina” is Spanish for “godmother,” but a deeper translation of a godparent is a friend literally becoming family. With Madrina, the owners wanted to create a place where people arrive as friends, and leave as family.

4216 Oak Lawn Ave., 469-513-2505

Kin Kin Urban Thai

Kin Kin literally means “Eat Eat” in Thai. The menu and the inspiration for the restaurant came from Chef Eddy Threthiphuangsin’s mother Pat and the phrase she’d often used to get him to eat when he was a boy. Many of the recipes, from dumplings (pictured above) to sauces come from things she taught him. She can still be found in the kitchen at this Fort Worth restaurant from time to time, too.

2801 West 7th St., Fort Worth, 817-984-1361



Wabi House

The name for this cozy Asian restaurant on Lowest Greenville Avenue was derived from the Japanese philosophy of wabi-sabi and Chef Dien's vision of creating a home for ramen. Before picking the location, Chef Dien came up with the name that reflected the contrast of their specialty, ramen, which is a refined version of the popular Japanese street food. Wabi translates to “embracing the beauty in the imperfection,” though finding a more perfect bowl of ramen in town surely isn't easy.

1802 Greenville Ave., 469-779-6474