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There's a New Chef in Town

Ellerbe Fine Foods opens for business Tuesday

By DEBORAH FERGUSON

Updated 1:50 PM CDT, Wed, Jun 10, 2009

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Deborah Ferguson

Two friends put their money and hearts on the line when Ellerbe Fine Foods in Fort Worth opened today. The restaurant's niche will be food prepared with products grown on local farms and ranches.

"I've been in the restaurant business about 12 years from bus boy to manager but never owned," said co-owner and general manager Richard King. What made him decide to become an owner? "Molly."

King and co-owner and chef Molly McCook go all the way back to childhood in Shreveport. Through the years, they shared their love of food and restaurants and talked about opening a place some day. Two years ago, they got serious.

It took a year to find the right place - an abandoned 1920's gas station at 1501 W. Magnolia Avenue on the city's near southside.



Chef Molly McCook shows off the heirloom tomatoes...



Ellerbe Fine Foods at 1501 W.



Co-owner Richard King hopes the patio dining at...

"We love Magnolia because it's a mom and pop street. It's what our entire business is," said McCook. "We love the building because it's a free standing an old gas station that we spent six months renovating."

The gas pumps are gone and in their place what King calls the best patio in Fort Worth. The inside dining area holds on to the past with the original floors right down to the painted stripes. A garage bay never looked so elegant.

The real test, of course, is the food.

McCook trained at the California Culinary Academy in San Francisco then went on to restaurants there and in Los Angeles. Ellerbe is her first restaurant and she admitted "it's a lot of pressure, but it's also something we both wanted."

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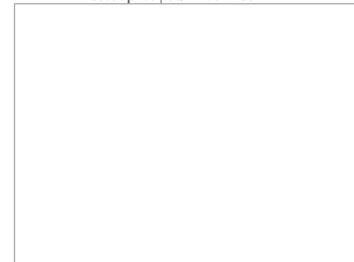
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The partners told NBCDFW their concept is unique to Fort Worth.

"We are trying the best we can to support our local food movement by using local farmers, cheese makers and purveyors as much as possible. Farm to plate is fresher," explained King.

"It's a challenge to get enough product (from local farmer's markets), yet it's also a great thing for the menu. I get to play with ideas and not be stuck on one thing," said McCook.

The name of the restaurant is a link to their past. Ellerbe is a street in their native Shreveport. McCook's grandparents lived there and had a garden. It's where McCook learned to appreciate fresh vegetables that went from the ground to the dinner table. McCook recently lost her grandfather, and her grandmother is struggling with Alzheimer's disease.

The Alzheimer's Association, Susan G. Komen Foundation and Shiner's Hospital for Children will get a portion of the proceeds this first week of business.

Also during this first week, King and McCook request reservations so they know just how many to expect during lunch and dinner hours. Lunch is Tuesday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Dinner is 5:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday and until 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For reservations, call 817-926-3663 (FOOD).

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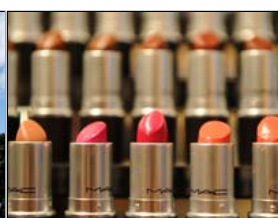
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