

FULL HOUSE

Phil Houssal



Munch: Food trucks find Fredericksburg

Justin Armes and his wife, Kara, consider themselves foodies. While traveling from Fredericksburg to larger cities on business, they noticed the rise of a new phenomenon: the food truck. It seemed to be a great concept for both the adventurous diner and the inventive chef, so they started brainstorming ways to bring the trend to Fredericksburg.

"We thought food trucks would be a good concept in this community," Armes said. "It's a different eating experience, being outdoors with the chance to try unique foods."



Justin Armes believes Fredericksburg is ready for food truck fare and craft beer and wine at his new Munch Food Park.

At first, the City of Fredericksburg wasn't quite ready for an invasion of meals on wheels. So the Armes put their idea on hold for several years while local ordinances caught up with the idea of serving food from mobile restaurants. But by the start of 2016, the Armes were breaking ground on a site at the entrance to Seitz Fundraising, their family business that is a fruit and meat wholesaler for national fundraising projects.

Last November, Munch Food Park opened.

"We hope to offer a venue that really promotes gourmet food out of food trucks," Armes said. "We want to give the opportunity for chefs who want to start a new business to come showcase what they can do, while at the same time give people a place to go and try different things at the same spot."



The food truck concept will allow diners to sample a variety of fare in a relaxed, outdoor setting.

More was new and different about this place than just serving food through a sliding window.

Armes' brother-in-law Justin Seitz of Fort Worth came up with a design theme that featured bright corrugated steel-sided silo-shaped structures.

"It was a different look. It's not 'Fredericksburg-y,'" Armes offered. Not at all. But it sure attracted attention, as passers-by speculated on what new business was rising on Highway Street.

"People were asking if it was a new winery, grain storage, park, and so on," Armes said. "They were definitely intrigued. But they like that it's well done."

The real answer to "What is Munch?" is just as interesting.

Munch Food Park is a public space and event venue. The main permanent structure is their "beverage barn," where they serve craft beers and wine. Along one edge, a lineup of food trucks cook up a diverse menu. Current vendors include Mahaley's at the Park, serving burgers and tacos (including breakfast tacos); Maui Shave Ice & Dogz, serving flavored shave ice and Nathan's famous hot dogs; and Fredericksburg Mini-Donuts, serving hot

donuts by the dozen, made fresh and covered with toppings to order.



With its steel structures and distinctive tower, Munch Food Park presents a different architectural look for Fredericksburg.

The menus can change, as the site will accommodate six food trucks with full hookups, with even more on the parking lot.

When the weather warms, Armes plans to add live music. In addition to the beverage barn, the site includes a fenced kids play area, shaded picnic tables, and a stage. It's family and pet friendly.

He sees the project as a win for everyone: diners have an easy way to experience new cuisine, while chefs can experiment with fresh menu ideas.

"We want people to come and try new foods, have a glass of wine, and enjoy the outdoors," he said. "You can sit here, or grab it and go. We are open to anybody. If you want to get out for a quick lunch, or enjoy the day, and don't want to mess with traffic and parking downtown."

People seem to like the ability to munch and sip outdoors.

"The majority of people walk out with a smile on their face," he said. "They say 'it's the coolest thing in town' and 'totally different than anything else.'"

Munch Food Park
1108 Sunco Street in Fredericksburg

Hours are Mon-Sat, 7 am-5 pm, though times vary for each food truck.

Information at:
www.munchfoodpark.com
and on Facebook @munchfoodpark.



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