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# FOOD & DRINK

Leading recipes

Readers share their favorite holiday recipes

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**LIST with a Leader**



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## Leader Nibbles

A weekend of food trucks and more food trucks!



**CHRISTINA MARTINEZ**

Each food truck will be providing a sample of their menu throughout the day. There will be craft beer and wine on site, as well as live entertainment. Adult tickets start at \$35 and this ticket gets you a sample from all 21 food trucks. To purchase tickets and find out what trucks are participating check out [www.thebest-foodtruckfest.com](http://www.thebest-foodtruckfest.com).

Fried Chicken is on the menu for the fall in the Heights

Another Southern classic has emerged in the Heights as The Chicken Ranch at 6500 N Main. The concept has come from former Goro & Gun owner Joshua Martinez and business partner Paul Sedillo. The two have had a soft opening over the span of two weeks and plan on being open fulltime Wednesday, Nov. 12. The Southern Heights eatery has had a few hiccups along the way. Tuesday morning the establishment tweeted: “Grrr. The emergency repairs continue. We will reopen Wednesday at 11 a.m.” Martinez told *The Leader* that electrical wiring in the kitchen was a nightmare and needed to be fixed the right way, instead of putting patches on top of more patches. Wednesday the menu will highlight their Southern chicken and sides, and Martinez says if there is one thing to try on the menu, it’s the collard greens.

Mad foodie experiments are happening on Shepherd

Over on Shepherd you can find a bargain in the car dealership realm and, now, owners of D&T Drive Inn and Down House have opened a different concept called the Kipper Club Test Kitchen. According to the website, Kipper Club Test Kitchen is an experiment in building community through food. Kipper Club hosts a series of weekly guest-chef dinners where guests will have a unique chance to get a close look at the chef’s creative process in an intimate open-kitchen setting. Experiments are being held this weekend and on through December. On Saturday, at 9 a.m. KCTK will host Part Two of Fish School with Chef PJ Stoops. The class is a bit pricey, but the class offers hands-on learning for prep-work, buying or catching your seafood and cooking. The class comes with lunch and take home material. For more information or to buy tickets, visit their website at [www.treadsack.com/kipperclub/](http://www.treadsack.com/kipperclub/)

Italian cuisine coming soon

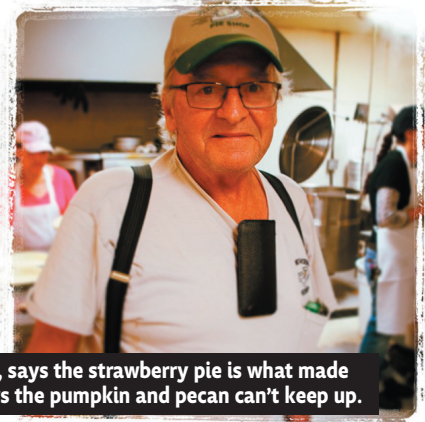
New signs are going up with the words “coming soon” at 1500 Shepherd Dr., where Mascalzone Ristorante Italian will soon open its doors. The Houston branch has another location that is up and running at 12126 Westheimer. The menu assures readers that sauces, pizzas and pastas are prepared and made to order. Variety is an option when it comes to the menu. From Avocado Al Gambero for a starter, to Taglierini Neri All’Aragosta - Black squid ink pasta with whole diced lobster, garlic basil, fresh tomatoes and chili for dinner. Don’t forget the desert and drink menu, too. A manager at the Westheimer location said readers can expect the Shepherd location to be open next month.

Have a tip for nibbles? Email [christina@theladernews.com](mailto:christina@theladernews.com).



A slice of HEAVEN

Photos by Betsy Denson



Flying Saucer Pie Company owner, Bill Leeson, says the strawberry pie is what made the company famous, even during the holidays the pumpkin and pecan can't keep up.

### A look behind the kitchen door of The Flying Saucer Pie Company before the holidays

By Betsy Denson  
[betsy@theladernews.com](mailto:betsy@theladernews.com)

The Flying Saucer Pie Company’s Bill Leeson could teach us all a lesson about work ethic. In his 70s, Leeson normally works from 5 a.m. to 2 p.m. But during November and December, when his pie company does the lion’s share of its business – selling 21,000 pies in three days during Thanksgiving weekend – he pulls an all-nighter with other staff, getting there around midnight and working straight through the morning. And he’s been at it since the 1960s.

Leeson arrived in Houston in 1963 from Canada as a 20-year old. For the previous five years, he’d been a merchant seaman.

“I was tired of being cold,” Leeson said. “When I got here I was broke. I had enough money for the plane fare but not a cab. I walked from Hobby to the Downtown YMCA.”

He already had a job in the hotel across the street and the Y let him stay until he could get his first paycheck. Leeson worked in hotels and cafeterias and eventually met Earl Turner, a former manager at Piccadilly Cafeteria, who founded Flying Saucer Pie Company in 1967. The original location from 1967 to 1975 was 15 blocks east of the current location at 436 W Crosstimbers Rd.

For many years, Leeson was partners with Turner’s daughter Marilyn Edgin. About 10 years ago, he bought Edgin’s share of the company as well, and now runs Flying Saucer with another partner. In 1975, Leeson built a new structure on Crosstimbers.

“The Garden Oaks Golf Club was across the street then,” he said.

Leeson did keep the name for the company though.



Jerry Garza is hard at work on chocolate pies.

“We were into the Apollo Space program then,” said Leeson. “Earl wanted something involving space. I was opposed to it, but over the years, I’ve realized I really love it.”

It was Turner who also introduced Leeson to his early pie bible, called *Pie Marches On*. The author of the 1939 book, Los Angeles’ Monroe Boston Strause, was known as the Pie King.

“He’s pictured in the book with [silent film star] Mary Pickford,” said Leeson. “It’s ancient.”

Ancient but handy, because it was here that Leeson learned recipes for classic pies. He’s had to alter the recipes over time to make way for more modern ingredients, when the old ones aren’t available, but on the whole, he’s making classic pies with classic ingredients.

“We don’t use any preservatives,” said Leeson.

“This building doesn’t have a freezer. We have a 30-hour rule. Pies made at 5 a.m. must be sold by noon on the next day.”

The best seller? Hands down it’s the Fresh Strawberry Cream pie

for \$14.75.

“It made us famous,” Leeson said. “Even during the holiday season the pumpkin and pecan pies don’t catch up to it.”

There are a number of Flying Saucer pies, like the more modern Key Lime, that didn’t come from *Pie Marches On*. Leeson likes to experiment too, even when it doesn’t work out. Like with his Tamarillo, or Tree Tomato, Pie.

“I thought it was delicious, but it didn’t sell.”

And the rice and raisin pie with vanilla filling, whipped cream and cinnamon that he invented for a Rice Institute convention in town.

“My daughter loved it,” he said. “It takes so long to get a new pie established though. You have to make it over a year’s time. It can be a financial drain.”

One thing that’s not a drain is the upcoming holiday season. They sell thousands of pies a day during the holidays and on Thanksgiving weekend, the line stretches anywhere from two to ten blocks. Policemen help keep things orderly and often times you can find the news helicopters overhead.

“When we get up to Thanksgiving, we have about 40 people helping at night,” said Leeson.

Not that people have a hard time finding Flying Saucer these days, but in case there is any doubt of your destination, look no further than the giant mural with the very happy green headed alien. Now an established artist, Rafael Angel Villarreal was a 15 year old when he came to visit Leeson and suggested a mural.

“I’d been thinking about a mural anyway so I said ‘why don’t you bring me some sketches,’” said Leeson.

After the project, done solely by spray paint, was completed, Leeson asked Villarreal how much he owed him.

“He said \$50. I said ‘how about \$500’? His face lit up. This was 1975.”



Tania Elliott takes a break and surveys the Pecan Pies. She’s partial to the cheesecake filling pies and says that during her pregnancy, all she wanted to eat were Flying Saucer’s warm crusts.

The third iteration of the mural will also be done by Villarreal in the near future.

A devoted father to three daughters and one son, Leeson said his greatest pleasure these days is to train people.

“I never hire anyone with any baking experience,” he said. “Never hire bad habits.”

When asked about his taxing schedule, Leeson, who lives in Spring, said that as he’s gotten older he doesn’t need as much sleep.

“I don’t do as much as I used to, but if necessary I can go out there and do it with the best of them.”

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