

If you thought restaurants had reached their saturation point downtown, then best you think again. Downtown will get another surge in restaurant openings when new buildings, such as the Vast Bank complex and the former OTASCO building project, welcome tenants in 2020.

After operating for 40 years at 71st Street and Yale Avenue, the French Hen Bistro & Wine Bar will be among five restaurants scheduled to locate in the Vast Bank building in the Tulsa Arts District. A spokesman for the restaurant said it will continue to operate at its current site until the move, likely to happen in the spring. Also coming to Vast is Osteria, an Italian restaurant that opened in Oklahoma City about a year ago. It is headed by two chefs — Oklahoma native Jonathan Stranger and Italian-born Fabio Viviani. In the Raw Sushi will break out two new concepts in Vast — in the raw GoGo and in the raw Vu. Vu will have a 1,250-square-foot rooftop terrace to go with 4,600 square feet of dining space. GoGo will be a grab-and-go sushi place. The fifth eatery in the building will be Hummingbird Coffee + Beer. Brook Restaurant & Bar will be among the tenants in the OTASCO building project at 201 E. Second St. The building will be called Park 201. The Brook will have 7,000 square feet indoors and 3,000 square feet of patio space. The target opening is March 1.

The Goat Bar & Kitchen, featuring Mediterranean/European cuisine, is projected to open in February or March in the East Village. Owners are James Alame and his cousin, Nabil Alame, who has moved here from Paris, France. James Alame is the son of Tally Alame, owner of Tally's Good Food Cafe. The owners of the Polo Grill have two projects going downtown. Calo Latin Grill & Tequileria will be located in the lobby of the historic Adams Building, and Blue Dome Market Restaurant & Bodega will open in the Blue Dome District. Another Blue Dome newcomer will be La Tertulia next door to Peacemaker Lobster & Crab. Chef Kevin Nashan, owner of both restaurants, said the new project is "near and dear to my heart." Nashan

was reared in Santa Fe, where his family owned a beloved northern New Mexican restaurant, La Tertulia, for 27 years. It was founded by his Hispanic grandfather in 1972. Four Tran family sisters — Linh, Kally, Marie and Ada — will open Kai, a Vietnamese restaurant, near the library and courthouses. Their parents were the founders of the long-running Viet Huong restaurant. Viet Huong was sold to new owners last year. Empire Slice House, a popular pizzeria out of Oklahoma City, will open between Cain's Ballroom and Soundpony Lounge in the old Yeti space. The Empire Slice House website describes itself this way: "Like Frank Sinatra and David Bowie had a pizza baby." MASA food truck, which features South American fusion cuisine, will make a more permanent home just down the street from Cain's when it takes over the food operation in The Hunt Club. Lisa Becklund and Linda Ford, operators of the Living Kitchen Farm & Dairy near Depew, are bringing their farm-to-table dining experience to the 18th Street and Boston Avenue area with FarmBar. It will be a 32-seat, dinner-only restaurant featuring agricultural cuisine of Oklahoma. They will continue their seasonal weekend dinners at the farm. Recently opened downtown were Amelia's Market & Brasserie in the Tulsa Arts District and Ike's Famous Plate Lunches (no connection to Ike's Chili House) in the Deco District. Those are the ones I know about. Likely, there will be more. What about parking, you ask? Good luck. Precious few places have free dedicated parking. Curbside parking can be scarce, but if you luck into one, it is free after 5 p.m. Otherwise, you are looking at paying at a surface parking lot or parking garage. Budget for it. Most years, I know of four or five restaurants I plan to review early in the coming year. In addition to the ones previously mentioned, I already see plenty to fill my schedule. Some opened late in the year, and some still are under construction. Among those I know have opened are Mark's Wings in north Tulsa, Flying Burger & Seafood in Catoosa, BJ's Restaurant & Bar near Woodland Hills, El Patron Cocina Mexicana in east Tulsa,

Peppers Fajitas Grill in Brookside and Bayou Boyz BBQ in Jenks. Del Taco, a national chain restaurant, was close to opening at 71st Street and Mingo Road at the time of this writing. Saffron Mediterranean Cuisine will open in the former Bangkok Thai Buffet space near 31st Street and Harvard Avenue. Also, look for Akira Sushi & Ramen and Da Yolk in the Mother Road Market, Big Whiskey's American Restaurant & Bar near 51st Street and Yale Avenue, Polo Lounge next to Polo Grill in Utica Square and a third location for The Bramble, this one in downtown Broken Arrow. Downtown Jenks will get a boost when Maggie's Music Box opens as a restaurant and music venue. It is owned by the operators of the former Soul City Gastropub. As one can see, we literally have a lot on our plate for 2020, so grab a bib and let's take this culinary ride together.

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