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Luxury Resort Camp Lucy to Open Tillie's, an Upscale Dining Restaurant, in Dripping Springs, Texas

DRIPPING SPRINGS, TEXAS – Whit and Kim Hanks, Founders of Whim Hospitality, announce the opening of Tillie's, an upscale dining restaurant on the grounds of Camp Lucy, a Whim-managed Texas Wine Country resort. The restaurant and bar will officially open its doors on October 1, 2018, at 3509 Creek Road, Dripping Springs, Texas.

As culinary palates around Austin continue to evolve, the Dripping Springs area has seen a number of quality dining options emerge in recent months. Tillie's will continue that growth by providing an elevated dining experience to local residents and Austinites looking for a new food adventure.

"We are excited to offer our community a place to gather and try something new that hasn't existed in Dripping Springs or neighboring towns," Whit Hanks said. "Everything we've done to build Tillie's was designed to create an experience that's both welcoming and unexpected."

The menu will reflect traditional American cuisine but with an international flare. The seasonal menu at Tillie's was shaped by Executive Chef Brandon Martin, a 12-year veteran of the Austin food scene who has worked in the kitchens at Foreign & Domestic, Lenoir, Old Thousand and served as Sous Chef at Odd Duck and Barley Swine.

Items from Tillie's first menu include fried Brussels sprouts seasoned with chili jam, orange supremes, crispy shallots and herbs; crisp pork belly with masa gnocchi, seasoned corn, chard, red-eye butter and a carrot puree; and Wagyu beef sirloin with grilled cabbage, corn relish, beef-infused pesto and black garlic jus. The menu offerings, however, are expected to evolve every few months as local availability of ingredients changes with the season. A craft cocktail and wine bar, providing more than 100 different types of wine, will highlight the restaurant's drink selections.

"I've worked in a lot of restaurants and have a lot of influences from the great chefs and cuisines that I've been exposed to," Martin said. "I really love experiencing new flavors and techniques, and I've tried to do a little bit of everything with our menu. Creating a menu that was based around locality and seasonality while infusing it with an international flavor palate is the inspiration for the meals we're creating."

Taking what's familiar and adding a unique international spin doesn't end with the Tillie's kitchen. The restaurant's dining room is a town hall imported from the Ninh Binh region of Vietnam that is more than 100 years' old. There is an additional separate dining room adjacent to the main restaurant which was also imported and repurposed from a Vietnamese family home that can accommodate private parties and business meetings.

"Our goal behind creating Tillie's is to evoke emotion," Kim Hanks said. "It's that emotion that you feel when you step into someplace new: whether it's a new city or a foreign land, how a new surrounding impacts your experience and changes the fabric of who you are when you are a part of something new, exciting and different."

Tillie's, which will serve breakfast, lunch, and dinner, adds to a growing list of features and amenities currently being added to the Camp Lucy grounds. A resort pool, complete with swim-up bar and adjoining outdoor brick oven, will be completed before the opening of Tillie's.

"Food is an integral part of all of our lives," Kim Hanks said. "It's how we come together to celebrate. It's what brings us together. It's one of the most common ways we connect with one another. We hope that Tillie's becomes the preferred place in Dripping Springs and Austin to come together and celebrate what lies ahead."



Tillie's Dining Experience

The concept behind the experience of dining at Tillie's can be described as "American Nouveau." It's a term used to explain a cuisine that borrows from several cooking traditions and techniques to create something new and exciting. It is the literal and figurative expression of the American 'melting pot' ideal.

Through its architecture and its menu, Tillie's aims to live this "American Nouveau" philosophy. The restaurant building, a repurposed town hall from the Ninh Binh region of North Vietnam, is the physical embodiment of a menu that takes inspiration from history and cultures and infuses it with a modern approach.

"We're going to have a lot of dishes on our menu that are recognizable to our guests, but include a few unexpected elements," Tillie's Executive Chef Brandon Martin said. "I have a very distinct flavor palette that I want to achieve, but it's how we get there that's going to be different. I want our guests to feel comfortable and grounded, but to also enjoy a new experience when they dine with us."

The Tillie's menu will reflect traditional American cuisine, but with an international flair. The seasonal menu at Tillie's was shaped by Martin, a 12-year veteran of the Austin food scene who has served as the Sous Chef at Odd Duck and Barley Swine, in addition to time spent working in the kitchens of Foreign & Domestic, Lenoir, and Old Thousand.

Complementing its modern kitchen, Tillie's will also have a hybrid gas- and wood-burning oven for preparing breads, pizzas, desserts and more. The wood used in the oven will be sustainably sourced from oak and pecan trees found on the Camp Lucy property. It's another way Tillie's will become the perfect cross between being internationally inspired and honoring our Texas roots.

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Executive Chef Brandon Martin

When the idea of creating an upscale dining restaurant at Camp Lucy first came to Whit and Kim Hanks, the two knew what kind of menu they wanted. They aspired to create something that would resonate with the local Dripping Springs and Austin communities while expanding the traditional Central Texas palate with an infusion of international flavors and cooking techniques.

In order for the Hanks to realize this vision at Camp Lucy, they needed to bring in an executive chef well-versed in both Texas comfort food and non-traditional high-end culinary dishes. They got their man in Brandon Martin, a 20-year kitchen veteran who has worked in some of the best restaurants in Austin and West Texas.

“When we interviewed potential chefs for Tillie’s, Brandon’s cooking just moved me,” Kim Hanks said. “When I tasted his food, I felt a sense of excitement build up inside of me. The surprising combinations he was using provoked a sense of curiosity. It fired up my curiosity, in addition to being absolutely delicious.”

Brandon Martin first discovered a passion for cooking while working in a bakery and German-style brew pub in Alpine, Texas. He contemplated enrolling at a formal culinary academy, but felt he had already learned the basics from his time in the kitchen and wanted to evolve his skillset by getting some real-world experience in a fine-dining kitchen.

Martin got a job working at the Gage Hotel in the West Texas town of Marathon, where he served under Executive Chef Paul Peterson. It was in this role that Martin began to take his passion seriously and turn his cooking skills into a profession.

“As I was contemplating leaving West Texas for culinary school, I heard about a chef (Paul Petersen) doing great things at the Gage Hotel, so I thought I could work under him, then go to culinary school,” Martin said. “I got the job but never went to school. That was the first high-end kitchen I worked in. That’s where I initially cut my chops and fell in love with cooking.”

After honing his skills at the Gage Hotel, Martin decided he needed to move to Austin to continue his career trajectory eventually landing in Chef Ned Elliott’s kitchen at Foreign & Domestic in 2011. Elliott’s guidance helped Martin elevate his technique, and he left for stops at Lenoir and Odd Duck, where he was named Head of Production, before being promoted to Sous Chef in 2014. He credits the Odd Duck trio of Mark Buley, Sam Hellman-Mass and Bryce Gilmore for continuing his culinary evolution.

“Those three were huge influences on me,” Martin said. “Those guys helped me to develop my management skills. They created a culture in the kitchen that I really want to replicate and that I didn’t know existed at that level. It’s a positive culture and attitude that easily flows into the dining room.”

He left the Austin food scene after two years at Odd Duck for a month in Chicago to gain experience in some heralded kitchens in the windy city. This setting gave him experience working with a variety of cooking styles, and experimenting with different flavor combinations.

Martin then returned to Austin, taking positions at Barley Swine, Old Thousand and Dai Due Taqueria. He has worked in fine dining settings that specialize in New American, as well as more specialized kitchens. It’s an eclectic background that has prepared Tillie’s first-ever executive chef for building a menu that will seem familiar to diners, while redefining traditional expectations through new concepts and a blending of cooking techniques.

“I like to be well-rounded and each of these stops has represented a new direction I wanted to go in,” Martin said. “I’ve worked in so many different restaurants because they all had something different to offer. From a young culinary age, I realized that I loved discovering new techniques and cuisines. I hope to convey this sentiment in the food at Tillie’s.”



Attilia “Tillie” Hancock

Attilia Aldridge Anderson Hancock was a world traveler that brought her international discoveries to Austin and its surrounding communities. More than 150 years later, her great grandson, Whit Hanks, carries on that tradition. To celebrate this philosophy, Kim and Whit Hanks could think of no one more deserving to name their new upscale dining restaurant after than “Tillie.”

Born in 1858, Attilia Hancock was exposed to prominence and prestige at an early age. After her father died when she was 12, Tillie’s mother married Judge Alexander Watkins Terrell, a Texas politician who served 16 years combined in both the Texas Senate and the House of Representatives. He was also the U.S. Minister to the Ottoman Empire and a member of the University of Texas Board of Regents.

When Tillie came of age, she married a prominent lawyer and banker named Lewis Hancock, who had established Austin’s first bank. In the late 1890s, Lewis and Tillie visited Scotland, where they learned of the game of golf. The Hancock’s brought their discovery back to Texas and founded the Austin Country Club, which popularized golf in Austin and the state of Texas. Tillie continued to vacation in Scotland and Europe throughout the early 1900s in an attempt to escape the summer heat. Eventually Lewis and Tillie built the Hancock Opera house in Austin, the first performance hall of its kind west of the Mississippi River. Lewis would also serve as Austin’s mayor from 1896 to 1897.

Tillie is also credited with being the first female developer in Austin when she oversaw the development of the Aldridge Place subdivision, a historic district located just north of the University of Texas campus, built on part of the Hancock estate.

Lewis and Tillie had five children, one of whom was Lewis Jr., a Naval Academy graduate who served on several battleships during World War I before losing his life in 1925 when the USS Shenandoah airship crashed in Caldwell, Ohio. In 1943, the destroyer USS Lewis Hancock was named in honor of Lieutenant Commander Hancock. Tillie’s fourth child, Margery, was Whit Hanks’ grandmother.

More than just a name, it is Tillie’s pioneer spirit and desire to spread her international knowledge with Central Texas that serves as the inspiration behind Dripping Springs’ newest dining attraction.

January 4, 1883 – Lewis Hancock returns to Austin and marries Attilia “Tillie” Aldridge.

1896 – Lewis Hancock becomes Mayor of Austin

1890’s – The Hancocks and fellow Austin aristocracy spend much time traveling abroad to try new foods, experience new cultures and activities and escape the Texas summers.

1896 – Lewis Hancock opens the Hancock Opera House on West 6th Street in Austin.

1899 – The Hancocks bring golf to Texas by establishing the Austin Country Club (now Hancock Golf Course).

1920’s – Attilia Hancock becomes 1st woman developer in Austin by developing second phase of Aldridge place, an affluent residential subdivision North of the University of Texas.



Kim and Whit Hanks

In early 2012, Whim Hospitality founders, Kim and Whit Hanks, saw a need in the burgeoning Texas Hill Country wedding and special events industry. The number of venues was growing but there were no truly local rental companies to effectively service them.

To fill this need, Whim Event Rentals was established, moving into a showroom and warehouse “just down the road” from Camp Lucy, the Hill Country’s premier venue in Dripping Springs, Wimberley, Southwest Austin, Lake Travis, and Fredericksburg. Recognizing a need for a more complete wedding and special event services experience, the creation of Whim Florals and Whim Catering expanded Whim’s services in 2013.

Since its launch, Whim has set about distinguishing itself by offering unique products in a unique way. Whim provides an innovative solution for juggling the logistics of various event vendors – party rentals, tent rentals, florals, catering, venue management, and event management – with its ability to service all needs through one elite provider, simplifying the event planning process and providing a sense of relief to planners and clients alike.

Kim Hanks, Whim Hospitality Co-founder and CEO

Co-founder Kim Hanks previously worked in the special events industry as a wedding planner, where she became well-versed in the challenge of bringing together different companies to create one seamless event. Through a thoughtful expansion plan, Whim grew from offering only rentals to providing a suite of event services creating a more streamlined experience for the client.

As an entrepreneur and the CEO of Whim Hospitality, Kim Hanks has grown her business from a small rental company in Dripping Springs to one of the largest and fastest growing woman-led businesses in the country. The diverse and ever-growing roster of services has put the business on the Austin Business Journal’s Fast 50 and the Inc. 5000 list for three-consecutive years.

Under Kim’s leadership, Whim has also won awards locally and nationally for its quality of service for rentals, florals, catering and event management. In addition to being named one of the top women business leaders in Central Texas by the ABJ, Hanks was honored with one of their Best CEO Awards in 2017.

She is active in industry organizations, belonging to the Texas Rental Association, the American Rental Association and the International Live Event Association. Additionally, she serves on the Dripping Springs Chamber of Commerce’s tourism board.

Whit Hanks, Co-founder and CFO

Specializing in architectural antiques, Whit Hanks founded Whit Hanks Antiques in the mid 1980s, while also working as real estate developer in the Central Texas region. He began acquiring property in the Dripping Springs area in 1985, and started developing Camp Lucy in 2008.

A successful career as an international antiques dealer provided him a sharp eye for the beautiful heritage pieces that have helped create the unique setting of the Camp Lucy resort and established Whim Hospitality as one of the premier event services providers in the United States.

The development of Camp Lucy, helped lead to the establishment of Whim Hospitality in 2012, an organization that was recently named to Inc. 5000’s list of America’s Fastest-growing Private Companies for the fourth consecutive year.

In addition to his responsibilities at Whim and Camp Lucy, Whit Hanks serves as the Chairman of the Board at Pioneer Bank and has served on the Historic Preservation Commission and Economic Development Committee for the City of Dripping Springs.



Camp Lucy

What started as a family getaway and morphed into Central Texas' premier wedding venue and continues to evolve into an experiential luxury resort with the addition of Tillie's restaurant and bar.

Camp Lucy has been a part of Whit Hanks' family for decades, originally acquired by the Mildred Hancock estate in 1985. Whit took control of the property in 1999 and his imagination began to take flight almost immediately.

"I knew I wanted this property to be something I could share," Whit Hanks said. "I didn't want to keep this beautiful land to myself. "

Drawing inspiration from high-end campgrounds in the Adirondacks, he chose the name Camp Lucy, in honor of his mother, Lucy Hanks, and began looking to develop the property so that it could support his vision.

While vacationing in Northern Vietnam, Whit discovered a wealth of Catholic artifacts that survived the Communist regime that took power in the 1950s. The dissolution of communism, and the subsequent return of Catholicism, brought back several exiled families and new money to the religious communities of Vietnam. Catholic villages in Vietnam were growing and looking for ways to finance new developments to support their faith. Whit began building a relationship with local antiquities dealers while acquiring traditional Catholic relics, and asked about purchasing one of the historic Catholic churches that was scheduled to be destroyed for a larger, more modern house of worship.

"I bought our first chapel around 2008, when we had no idea what we were doing," Whit Hanks said. "We broke the original wooden building down, piece-by-piece, and then had it shipped to Dripping Springs, where we reassembled each piece."

While shipping the original chapel back to Texas, Whit met his future wife, Kim, who was serving on the Dripping Springs Planning & Zoning Commission. Kim was the owner of Dripping Springs Party Rental at that time, and she suggested that Whit take his chapel and turn Camp Lucy into a wedding venue. Her knowledge of the local wedding industry, paired with the natural beauty of Camp Lucy, had the potential to be something special.

"Around this time, there was this weird phenomenon happening as Dripping Springs started seeing all of these wedding venues pop up," Kim said. "Dripping Springs is so pretty and so many brides are looking for outdoor spaces. This local trend of weddings got back to Whit, and he started thinking about this idea of turning Camp Lucy into a wedding venue."

Whit didn't stop at the Chapel, later purchasing a large wooden pavilion in Vietnam that would provide an indoor/outdoor reception space for ceremonies at Ian's Chapel. He would continue to grow the venue by acquiring a historic Amish barn in Ohio to serve as the base structure for a large-scale Events Hall.

Over the years, Camp Lucy has grown to include three more venues, Sacred Oaks, Whit's Inn and the Camp Lucy Vineyard. Whit and Kim quickly realized how much Dripping Springs was becoming a tourist destination, with the recent "Wedding Capital of Texas" designation and emerging wineries and distilleries leading the charge. Lodging options and luxury accommodations were added in April of 2014.

The popularity of these suites and family cottages helped Camp Lucy pivot from serving solely as a wedding venue into becoming a true Texas Wine Country resort. The addition of Tillie's, the resort pool and swim-up bar, solidifies this transition.



Design Team

Paul Smith, Facilities Manager at Camp Lucy

Paul Smith has put his unique design style on almost every aspect of the luxury resort property over the past 10 years.

Paul is a landscape architect with more than 20 years' experience in project management and design at RVI Planning + Landscape Architecture + Graphic Design, serving as the organization's Director of Landscape Architecture. It was this role that brought him to Camp Lucy.

Eventually, Paul oversaw the construction design of the original Vietnamese churches that were imported to create Ian's Chapel. Over the years, Paul has helped Camp Lucy evolve from a breathtaking wedding venue into a full-scale luxury resort at the gateway to the Texas Wine Country.

The creation of Tillie's, including the construction of the accompanying resort pool, swim-up bar, wood-fire brick oven, and private dining room (also imported from Vietnam), represents the most complex project in the 10-year history of the Hill Country property. Paul's understanding of Camp Lucy's unique setting helped create the newest standout dining space in Central Texas.

Deborah Kirk, Interior Designer at Camp Lucy

Having first met Whit Hanks in Austin's antiquing industry, Deborah Kirk brings a sophisticated eye, rich with historical context, to her interior designs for Camp Lucy.

Deborah has been one of the leading visionaries behind the unique look of Camp Lucy's interior design. From the wedding venues to the resort accommodations on the property, Deborah's incorporation of furniture and fixtures with a rich history and character into her design has helped create the eclectic atmosphere that defines the Texas Wine Country resort.

As the founder of Deborah Kirk Interiors, Deborah prides herself on using old-world items in innovative ways to create an aesthetic that comes across as original and natural. It's an approach that has created a setting that is both organic and unusual for Central Texas.



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