

5280

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The Thunderbird Imperial Lounge To Open Dec 3

Jesse Morreale's tavern will start serving at 8 p.m. Saturday, December 3.

BY **AMANDA M. FAISON**
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Thunderbird

In August, *5280* announced that long-time Denver restaurateur **Jesse Morreale** was partnering with **Larimer Associates/City Street Investors** on a **project** that would rework the former TAG Burger Bar space on 38th Avenue and Lipan Street. Now, after three months of planning, menu writing (Solera's **Goose Sorensen** is the **consulting chef**), and construction, the **Thunderbird Imperial Lounge** will open on Saturday, December 3.

Don't go expecting a glossy new space. Morreale was intent from the beginning on creating a bar that felt like it had been through the ages. "It's a hodgepodge, it feels like home," Morreale says. "I want people to walk in and think 'How did I not know that this was here?'" Fans of Morreale's previous spots (Mezcal, Tambien, El Diablo, RockBar, and Sketch) might recognize some of the furnishings, most notably the giant wrought iron chandelier that used to hang over RockBar's dance floor. (Truth: At one point, the fixture had to be removed because patrons tried to swing from it.) At Thunderbird, the piece is strategically mounted over the bar (i.e. no room for Tarzan-like moves). There are also booths from RockBar and Mexican lanterns from El Diablo. Posters from Morreale's days as a concert promoter decorate the walls and a vintage jukebox sits in the corner. The Thunderbird already feels justifiably worn in and comfortable.

The menu cuts a similar path with a mix of bar fare ranging from wings (buffalo hot, chipotle ranch, spicy Asian, or Cajun) and tomato soup to a Sloppy Joe and a Botifarra (Spanish-style) hot dog. "It's irreverent and not complicated, but still elevated," Morreale says. "Instead of jalapeño poppers, there are shishitos with Sriracha cream cheese; we have jicama slaw instead of regular coleslaw." Morreale will also add a few favorites from El Diablo and other restaurants along the way.

The Thunderbird will open with a limited menu and limited kitchen hours (Monday through Friday 4 to 11 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday 10 a.m. to 11 p.m.), both will expand as time goes on. The bar will serve until 2 a.m.

3759 Lipan St.