**This is SideDish for Tuesday, June 14, 2016**

**A Snapshot of Steak 48**

**By Teresa Byrne-Dodge**

**Photos by ???**

The new mixed-use development called River Oaks District – it’s located on the north side of Westheimer just inside Loop 610 – has been opening piecemeal the past couple of months. The retail stores are very high end; they include Dior, Hermes, Etro, Cartier, Tom Ford, Patek Philippe, Stella McCartney and Dolce & Gabbana, among others. Likewise, a slew of out-of-town eateries have carved out spaces for themselves here. We already told you about Toulouse Cafe & Bar, a Dallas concept. Hopdoddy Burger Bar from Austin is also already open. Last Friday I was a pre-opening guest at Steak 48, scheduled to officially debut tonight. Here’s a quick look at what to expect.

Steak 48 comes to Houston from its hometown of Phoenix, where it’s known as Steak 44, as it’s on North 44th Street in that city. Anticipating a confusion with 44 Farms, a Houston-area cattle business, the name was modified to Steak 48. Brothers Jeffrey and Michael Mastro, who previously developed the popular Mastro’s Steakhouses (including one in Beverly Hills), sold that chain and then took off five years during the non-compete time of the sales contract. Now they are back, with the two-year-old Steak 44 in Phoenix and two new Steak 48 locations in Houston and Chicago.

The brothers like to make the point that many steakhouses are potently masculine places – all about Scotch and cigars. Their Steak 48 has a warmer and more contemporary feel. I wouldn’t call it feminine, but I can see the point that it’s a lighter-weight vibe. There are many small rooms that break up this very large two-story space, and outdoor spaces (such as the second-story balcony overlooking Westheimer) are full of potted greenery. Throughout the palette is rich dark brown, ivory and dark grey, and the lighting is sparkly. The huge long slab of wood used on the main bar comes from a single tree and was dry-cured for three years before installation.

Executive chef Jeff Taylor, a veteran of the Del Frisco’s restaurant group, heads up culinary production and operations in Houston. The menu has a “small” and “regular” group of prime steaks and chops, though “small” is clearly subjective here – the smallest filet is still eight ounces. The steaks are priced as you might anticipate, ranging from $39 for a 12-oz. New York strip to $59 for an 18-oz. bone-in filet mignon. There are wagyu options, too, with limited availability and market priced. Any of the steaks can be ordered with a fried egg on top, Dennis Farina-style. (Farina was a fan of the Mastro’s filet with a fried egg and two slices of grilled toast.)

Walk past the glass-walled kitchen – oh, if you can, reserve one of the five booths adjacent to the kitchen with floor-to-ceiling glass that allows you to look right down the line in the kitchen, but without the heat or noise – and you’ll note a lavish seafood display. Steak 48 also does a fine selection of raw and cooked seafood, which should not be a surprise since the brothers also owned Mastro’s Ocean Club. These include enormous king crab legs, a nice Hawaiian poke of ahi or salmon, super colossal (six to eight count) shrimp and fresh oysters with Champagne mignonette. Given the chef’s knowledge of Houston diners, I wouldn’t be surprised to see him add garlicky grilled oysters and/or Mexican-style campechana to the menu before long.

In addition to the beef, choose steakhouse meatloaf, pan-sauteed chicken, rack of lamb and bone-in veal chop. Starters include meatballs (made from the in-house butcher’s scraps), fresh burrata and braised pork belly served over sautéed spinach. Among the sides, some stand out, including mac ’n’ cheese, roasted sweet potatoe cubes topped with a torched marshmallow (I’m not too proud to admit I liked it), a crisp hasselback potato and asparagus fries.

The wine list is weighted toward American bottles, but you’ll spot some Italian, French and Argentinean, too. Guess how many wines by the glass are offer? 48, of course.

Don’t get lost like I did in River Oaks District while looking for the restaurant. It’s out on Westheimer on the western corner at Westcreek Lane. It’s open for dinner only. Self park or valet parking.

**Steak 48**, 4444 Westheimer in River Oaks District, 713-322-7448, steak48.com.