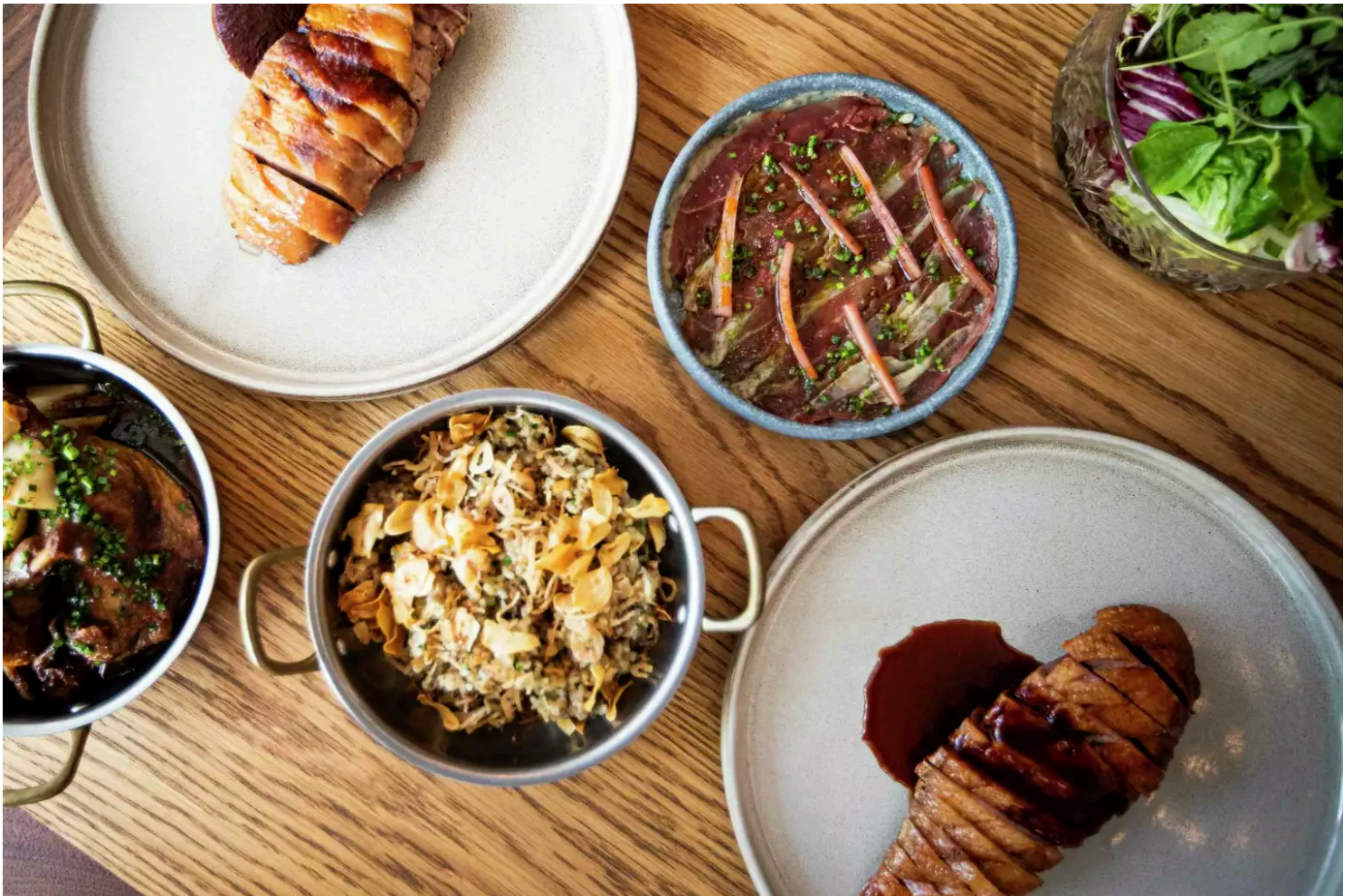




RESTAURANTS & BARS

Goode Company CEO Levi Goode's first standalone concepts celebrate Texas cuisine, history



The Sweetwater whole duck at Credence
Ishika Samant/Staff photographer

By **Bao Ong**, Staff writer

Aug 6, 2024

 Gift Article



Levi Goode, who oversees 11 restaurants under his family-owned Goode Company group, knows classic dishes like the zippy campechana de mariscos, mesquite-smoked brisket and Brazos Bottom Pecan Pie are never going off the menu.

The CEO also knows the if-ain't-broke-don't-fix-it approach isn't a way to grow a business.

Since launching his own separate brand, called Levi Goode, last year, the James Beard-nominated restaurateur is now ready to unveil Credence and Sidebar, his first standalone concepts.

"My aspiration was to build a Texas hospitality brand, focused on the Texas lifestyle," Goode said. "This was the guiding light for Credence and Sidebar."

For nearly 50 years, Houstonians have flocked to Goode Company restaurants seeking familiar comfort foods including Tex-Mex, barbecue and Gulf Coast seafood. But with the Aug. 20 opening of Credence and Sidebar, located at 9757 Katy Freeway in the booming Memorial area, Goode is embarking on a new chapter as one of Houston's most prolific restaurateurs.

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Credence opens on August 20, 2024, in Memorial City

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New York-based architecture and design firm Gensler designed both spaces, which sport earthy tones, penny tiles, wood floors and antique rugs.

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Goode tapped the Houston-based Weingarten Art Group to select the artwork for the projects, including photography depicting Southwest Texas.

The entrance to Credence features a lobby-like area for customers to grab drinks before sitting down for dinner. There's also a raw bar lined with oysters and tins of caviar that overlooks the open kitchen with its fiery hearths fueled by post oak wood.



Left to right, Justin Basye, Levi Goode and Joseph Geiskopf, photographed at Credence
Ishika Samant/Staff photographer

In the kitchen, Joseph Geiskopf oversees the live-fire cooking that inspires a "South Texas, ranch-inspired, upscale concept."

The chef, who last worked at Ciel, has a resume that includes Michelin-starred Pineapple & Pearls in Washington, D.C., where was the executive chef.

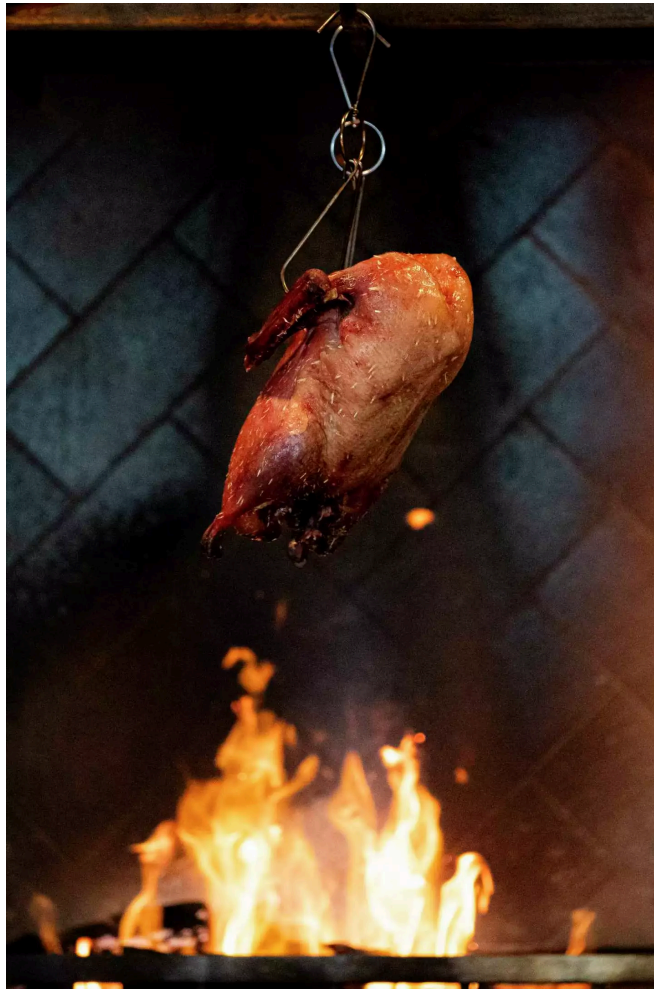
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Geiskopf imparts his classic French training on a variety of dishes with a Texas flair, including a gnocchi that uses cornbread with flour that is lightly smoked, he said.

“It’s very authentic but not fully traditional in what you’d expect,” Geiskopf said. “I feel like it’s up to us to have a say of what Houston food is, which is a big mashup of everything.”

There are seafood towers, steaks and Gulf snapper, but perhaps the most impressive show stopper is the Sweetwater whole duck, which serves two people.



A duck cooked over an open fire at Credence
Ishika Samant/Staff photographer

The Rohan ducks are cured for six to eight months and presented tableside. A flurry of dishes appear using nearly every part of the bird: duck prosciutto, sliced duck breasts that's glazed in honey, confit duck legs presented in a cassoulet with various vegetables and "duck dirty rice," where greens and Caroline gold rice are dotted with trimmings from other parts of the duck.

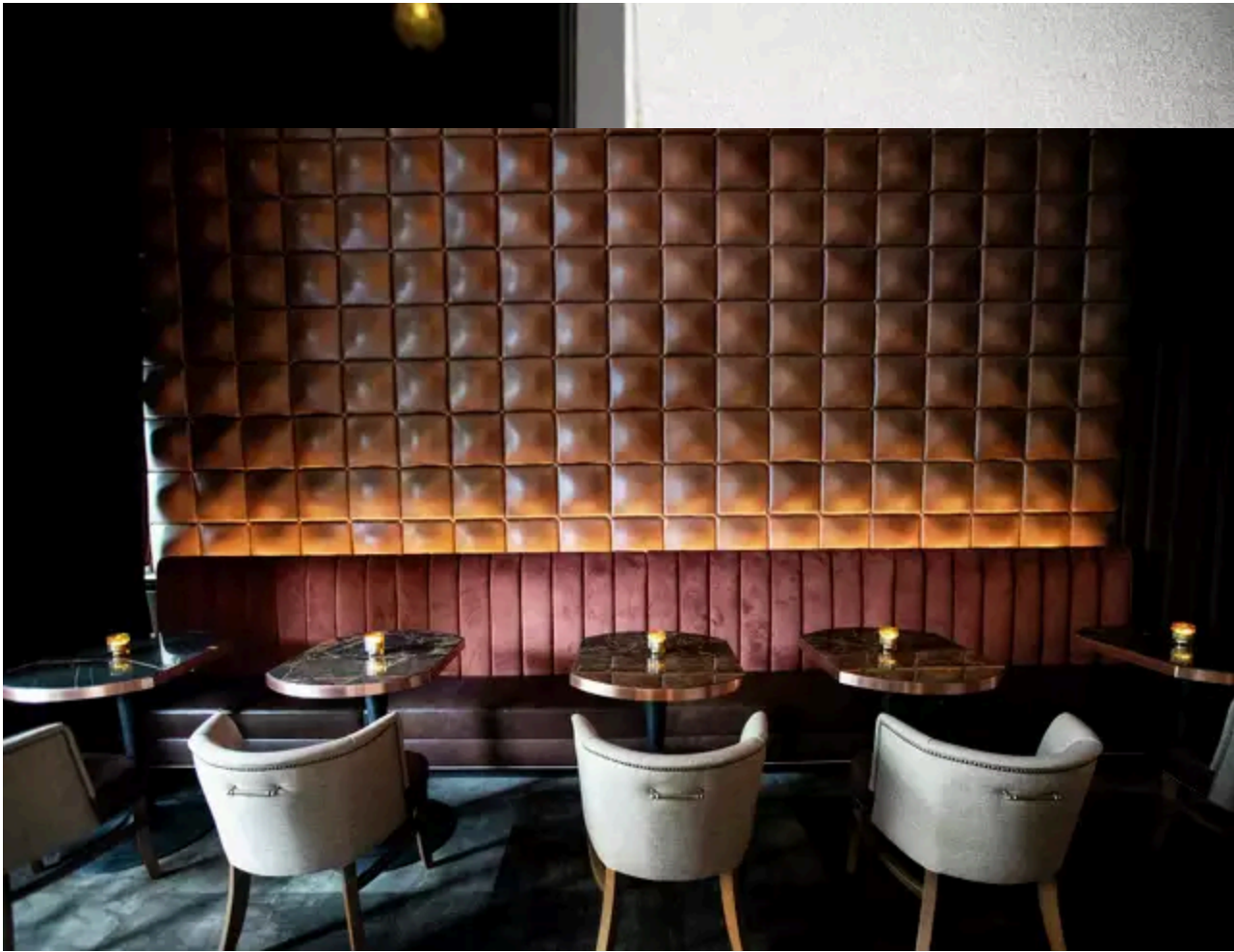
It's a dish Geiskopf describes as the "fajita-plate moment," where customers turn around to see what the next table just ordered.

"The environment is meant to be energetic," Goode added.

Roving carts with martini service will also weave through the dining room.

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Sidebar is a reservations-only restaurant and bar attached to Credence

Sidebar is more than a speakeasy-inspired bar customers can enter through Credence or a discreet door in the back of the building off the parking lot facing the Katy Freeway.

The reservations-only space takes a page from the opulence of the Texas oil boom of the early 1900s, according to Goode.

Customers can order classic cocktails, champagne or more modern drinks like riffs on Old Fashioneds and Manhattans.

For Geiskopf, the food menu at Sidebar allows him to explore some of his fine-dining background. Deviled eggs may be topped with Hokkaido king crabs that have been gently warmed sake lees butter. Soft serve is drizzled with small-batch olive oils.

"Dining out should be fun," Goode said. "You want to create an environment people want to be in again and again."

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Bao Ong
RESTAURANT COLUMNIST



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He previously worked on staff at Eater New York, Bon Appétit and Time Out New York. In addition to Bao's background in journalism, he also graduated from the French Culinary Institute. He moved to Houston in summer 2022 and in his first year, he won the top award in the Comment and Criticism category awarded by the Texas Managing Editors organization. Follow where he's eating and drinking on Instagram: @baohaus

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