

What's Up, College Station? Transcript (Season 4, Episode 33)

Grace Hollowell: When people think of food cities, they think of Dallas or Austin. But College Station has a diverse food scene as well. What's up, College Station? I'm Grace Hollowell, and today I'm joined by Sadie Martinez, Visit College Station's events coordinator. Welcome back.

Sadie Martinez: Thank you.

Grace Hollowell: The last time you were on, we discussed Christmas events. We are heading into a busy time with students returning. College Station is full of life again, and our inaugural Restaurant Week is coming up this week. Before we get into that, give us a refresher on who you are and what you do.

Sadie Martinez: I am the events coordinator for Visit College Station. I plan and coordinate events for the community as well as events that promote tourism and show what College Station offers. Restaurant Week is one of those events. It required coordinating with local community partners and restaurants, with extensive emailing behind the scenes. We're excited for it to come to fruition this week.

Grace Hollowell: What changes for your job during this late summer and fall season? Coming from the North, winter and fall were when tourism died off because of the cold. Here, it is the opposite.

Sadie Martinez: It is the opposite; it's very hot here. This is our busy time. I thrive in chaos and busyness, and my hotel and restaurant background keeps me motivated. Extensive planning and coordination happen behind the scenes, and now those fall and winter events are coming to life.

Grace Hollowell: What is your favorite part of what you do?

Sadie Martinez: Seeing my work come to life, collaborating with the community and local restaurants, and putting on events everyone can enjoy.

Grace Hollowell: For listeners and viewers hearing about College Station's Restaurant Week for the first time, what is it?

Sadie Martinez: Restaurant Week runs August 24 through 30. It is a weeklong celebration of local restaurants, with eight participating this year. Each restaurant will offer a Prix Fixe menu specifically created for Restaurant Week. Diners can select a three-course dinner—or lunch, if offered—comprising an appetizer, entree, and dessert at a set price. Prices vary by location. The menus are uploaded on the Visit College Station website so people can

pick where to go in advance. Additionally, 10% of all proceeds from each restaurant will benefit the Brazos Valley Food Bank, allowing diners to give back to the community.

Grace Hollowell: How did this inaugural event come about, and why was now the right time to launch it?

Sadie Martinez: We always look for ways to showcase College Station and create experiences for visitors and residents. Restaurants are a huge part of that. We wanted to spotlight local restaurants and encourage residents to explore new options. With school starting back up, new students, parents, and faculty arriving, and people returning from summer break, this was the perfect time for people to enjoy these restaurants at a fixed price.

Grace Hollowell: What do you hope Restaurant Week accomplishes for the local dining scene?

Sadie Martinez: I hope it brings more foot traffic and new faces to these restaurants, provides an easy way to give back to the community, and builds traction so we can expand in future years.

Grace Hollowell: What can people expect when visiting a participating restaurant during Restaurant Week?

Sadie Martinez: Each restaurant will have a special Prix Fixe menu showcasing their culinary creativity. Diners receive a special menu with options for an appetizer, entree, and dessert at a set price, rather than paying individually for each item. This offers a discounted rate, making it more affordable for people who might not regularly experience these places.

Grace Hollowell: How were the eight participating restaurants selected for the first year?

Sadie Martinez: Since it is our first year, we kept it focused while ensuring a variety of cuisines—including Tex-Mex, steakhouses, and icehouses. We focused on higher-end restaurants so people can try them at a set price, with plans to grow the lineup in future years.

Grace Hollowell: What does this variety say about College Station's food scene?

Sadie Martinez: It shows our diversity. You don't need to go to Austin, Houston, or Dallas to experience a diverse food scene; we have it right here. So many new restaurants have opened in recent years that I can't even try them all.

Grace Hollowell: Do diners need reservations?

Sadie Martinez: I recommend reservations if the restaurant accepts them. Check the individual restaurant's website for their policy. Information regarding menus and dates is available on the Visit College Station Restaurant Week website.

Grace Hollowell: 10% of menu proceeds benefit the Brazos Valley Food Bank. Why was giving back an important part of planning?

Sadie Martinez: I always try to include a give-back component in events, and pairing food with the Brazos Valley Food Bank was a natural fit. The Food Bank does extensive work for our community, and we wanted this event to have a purpose beyond dining out.

Grace Hollowell: What impact do you hope this partnership will have?

Sadie Martinez: I hope Restaurant Week generates strong turnout so we can contribute significantly to the Brazos Valley Food Bank, help our neighbors, and support the local economy.

Grace Hollowell: What does this event mean for business owners introducing diners to new dishes?

Sadie Martinez: It brings people into the restaurants to try new dishes. People often stick to habits when dining out, but the limited Prix Fixe menu encourages diners to branch out while driving foot traffic.

Grace Hollowell: What advice do you have for someone planning their week?

Sadie Martinez: Visit the website to review the menus in advance, choose your favorites, and plan a tour. You can visit multiple restaurants throughout the week.

Grace Hollowell: What would you say to someone on the fence about participating or hesitant to try new foods?

Sadie Martinez: Use this week as an excuse to branch out, enjoy a date night or family outing, take a break from cooking, and treat yourself.

Grace Hollowell: What do you hope people take away from this first Restaurant Week?

Sadie Martinez: I hope people feel good about giving back, try new places and drive traffic to local restaurants. I hope the event grows in future years so we can continue giving back.

Grace Hollowell: Where can people find details, and what are the dates again?

Sadie Martinez: Restaurant Week is August 24th through 30th. Details and menus are available on the Visit College Station website under the Restaurant Week dropdown menu.

Grace Hallowell: Ready for the lightning round? Sweet or savory?

Sadie Martinez: Savory.

Grace Hallowell: What is your go-to comfort food?

Sadie Martinez: Pizza or Mexican.

Grace Hallowell: If College Station had an official food, what would it be?

Sadie Martinez: Fried chicken seems appropriate.

Grace Hallowell: Dine-in or takeout?

Sadie Martinez: Takeout.

Grace Hallowell: Describe College Station's food scene in one word.

Sadie Martinez: Diverse.

Grace Hallowell: Thank you for being here, Sadie.

Sadie Martinez: Thank you for having me.