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Texas Hill Country Wine and Food Festival Interview: Tyson Cole of Uchi and Uchiko

You're probably familiar with **Tyson Cole**, one of Austin's best known chefs and Executive Chef at **Uchi**. You probably also know that he's hard at work on his second restaurant, **Uchiko**, which will be located at 4200 North Lamar. But did you also know that he's working on a cookbook? And aren't you kind of curious as to what his favorite places to eat in Austin are? The answer might surprise you!



Image via [UchiAustin.com](#).

The Hill Country Food and Wine Festival is going on next week. What sets this festival apart from others in your mind?

The festival is symbolic of the way things are going in Austin. The Long Center has really raised the bar and changed everything for this festival. Bringing it into Austin, with the city as a backdrop and eliminating stuffy dining rooms and opening it up more, this makes it pretty incredible.

Any clues to what you'll be doing for the Grand Tasting next Friday?

We're tossing around a lot of ideas. Pastry Chef Philip Speer will be doing a separate table, maybe using liquid nitrogen for a dessert. On the savory side, we'll be doing tomato water with celery and fresh mussels, a beet terrine and SE Asian fried peanuts with Thai basil, fish sauce and chiles.

According to your blog, it looks like the preparations for Uchiko are coming along well. Any estimates on when it might open?

The space will be delivered in 30-45 days, then we'll be spending a few weeks hiring and training the new staff. After that, we'll have a couple of weeks of soft openings, so it looks like sometime in June.

The big question...will Uchiko take reservations?

Uchiko will be about 95% reservations. Also, Uchi does take limited reservations both for early and later seatings.

How will the menu at Uchiko be different than Uchi?

Paul Qui, currently the Chef de Cuisine at Uchi (and one of the proprietors of East Side King) will be the Executive Chef at Uchiko. He started as a *stage* from Texas Culinary Academy six years ago and has worked his way up through the organization. He's Philipino so he's very influenced by the flavors of Southeast Asia and that will be seen in the food. There will still be the same concept of hot and cold tastings and shared plates. Part of the interactivity of a meal at Uchi is having a new plate hitting the table throughout the meal. That concept will carry over to Uchiko as well.

Your blog mentions an Uchi Cookbook. Can you share a little more about that? When is it planned for release?

DJ Stout of Pentagram Design is designing the book. We've actually finished all of the recipes and are working on photography now. Right now, it looks like we'll self-publish the book, so it will probably be six months to a year before it's released.

What are some of your favorite places to eat in Austin?

I really like the interesting things they're doing at La Condesa. Fino is also great, and of course, East Side King. One of my wife's and my favorite places, though, is Houston's. They do consistently good food there. People look down on the whole chain concept, but you're doing something right if there's a desire to replicate it!

Top Chef Masters just started. Would you ever be interested in participating?

Two of the contestants, Maria Hines and Lachlan Mackinnon-Patterson, were in the 2005 Food and Wine Best New Chefs class with me. It's a good question! I would have to think about it. My wife and I pretty much only watch reality TV, and after doing Iron Chef, I realized that TV is all about drama. I'd worry about going off to do something like that and coming out looking like an idiot. No matter what your experience is as a chef, the curve balls they can throw you can be tough. If they said make a soufflé, I'd have no idea. So I'd have to think about it.

Chef Cole's dishes will be served at the Stars Across Texas Grand Tasting on Friday evening at 7PM at The Long Center.

INTERVIEW TYSONCOLE UCHI UCHIKO

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