

Victor Matthews' vision for Tava House dining in Woodland Park | Table Talk

By Teresa Farney and Teresa J. Farney December 31, 2025 |



Victor Matthews is the executive chef and director of food and beverage for the dining outlets at the Tava House in Woodland Park. Photo by Teresa Farney

Victor Matthews is living his dream come true.

Matthews, along with a handful of investors, is gearing up to open Tava House in Woodland Park. Owner of Black Bear Distillery in Green Mountain Falls and dean of Paragon Culinary School, Matthews will serve as executive chef and food and beverage director of the multi-concept destination, which will feature two food outlets—an upscale fine-dining restaurant and a more casual taphouse.

Matthews is no newcomer to the restaurant industry in the Rockies. In 2000, he purchased the 40-year-old Black

Bear Restaurant in Green Mountain Falls. Within his first year of ownership, the tiny log-cabin-style eatery earned four stars and statewide recognition for its Louisiana-style fine dining — an impressive feat for a remote mountain restaurant.

Shortly before the pandemic, and following the Waldo Canyon fire, which made operating the restaurant impossible for several years, Matthews closed the restaurant and pivoted the business model to Black Bear Distillery, shifting his focus to spirits production and the continued development of Paragon Culinary School. Still, the idea of a destination restaurant in the mountain communities southwest of Denver never left him.

Over the years, Matthews often spoke of his desire to create a place that combined serious food, thoughtful design, and a sense of arrival, something worthy of a special trip.

That opportunity arrived in 2018.

“In 2018, Derek Waggoner and Mark Weaver came to talk to me,” Matthews said. “They were interested in developing property in Woodland Park and wanted to have a pour-your-own-draft taproom. I loved it but suggested adding a restaurant or other streams of income to balance the risks.”

After exploring several concepts, and with additional investors joining the project, an upscale steakhouse emerged as the clear winner.

From 2019 into 2020, progress was slowed by the pandemic and city approval processes. By 2021, plans had begun to clear municipal hurdles, and the investors secured the land deal that set the project in motion, though it would take until 2024 for the project to officially break ground.

With Matthews' experience designing exciting kitchens with his eye for creating elegant dining spaces, the restaurant is now taking shape.

"We're calling it mountain sexy," Matthews said during a tour of the facility. "It's Tweeds meets The French Laundry."

The phrase is his shorthand for blending mountain sophistication — a nod to Woodland Park's Tweeds Fine Furnishings — with the precision and discipline of fine dining embodied by Napa Valley's iconic restaurant.

The fine-dining restaurant will occupy the upper level of a striking two-story building, wrapped in floor-to-ceiling glass that frames sweeping views of Pikes Peak and the surrounding mountain range.

"The upper-floor kitchen windows face the main street through Woodland Park," Matthews said. "At night, chefs will be visible through the glass in tall white hats and jackets. People driving through will see there's something special happening here — and instead of passing by, they'll stop for a meal."

The dining room will seat 60 to 65 guests and feature a dramatic solid-walnut community table. A see-through fireplace will anchor the space, set into the wall between the kitchen and dining room.

"Chefs working the line will be visible behind the fireplace," Matthews said. "Our meat-aging room will also be on display. Chefs will reach in, select the meat, cut it at the station, then move it to the indoor smoker or grill. This kitchen is almost like Black Bear 2.0."

The lower level of the building will house a casual beer pub with a 20-tap self-serve tap wall, along with a presence from Black Bear Distillery and other Colorado craft distilleries. An event and ballroom space — named the River Room after the headwaters of Fountain Creek located on the property — is already booking weddings and private events.

"Our target opening is spring 2026 — hopefully a few weeks before Mother's Day weekend," Matthews said.

As the tour wrapped up, Matthews shared one final detail close to his heart: “There will be a secret menu I call Casian — a fusion of Cajun and Asian dishes,” he said. “Those are flavors I love.”

Follow facebook.com/tavahouse to track progress of the project.

Wine and dine to help out

Pizzeria Rustica, 2527 W. Colorado Ave., will host Passport to Veneto at 6 p.m. Jan. 27, benefiting Ukraine Power, a nonprofit organization that works directly with people on the ground in Ukraine to alleviate suffering by addressing immediate needs.

For \$89 (plus tax and tip), guests will enjoy a five-course dinner paired with Italian wines. The menu includes radicchio and Parmesan salad, polpette fritte con marinara (fried meatballs with tomato sauce), pizza, chicken thigh confit and pinza veneta, a flan-like cake.

Reservations are required. Call Coaltrain Fine Wines, Craft Beers & Spirits at 719-475-9700.

Beer dinner and tastings

The Carter Payne, 320 S. Weber St., is offering several upcoming beer-focused events:

- Local Relic Small Brew monthly bottle release, noon–4 p.m. Saturday. Free and open to the public; beer and light snacks available for purchase.
- Winter Warmer: A Community Dinner, doors at 5:30 p.m., dinner at 6 p.m. Jan. 17. Family-style dinner, \$45 per person. Tickets are available at thecarterpayne.com.
- Local Relic Small Brew monthly bottle release, noon–4 p.m. Jan. 24. Free and open to the public; beer and light snacks available for purchase.

Wine bar happenings

Uva Wine Bar, 1268 Interquest Parkway will be open 4–9 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday, with live music. Details: 719-598-1990 or uvawinebarcos.com.

Upcoming events include:

- Northern Italy Wine Dinner, 6:30 p.m. Jan. 20. \$79 (plus tax and tip) for a three-course dinner paired with four wines.
- Elegance in Red: A Pinot Noir Dinner, 6:30 p.m. Feb. 24. \$79 (plus tax and tip) for a three-course dinner paired with four wines.
- Monthly Wine Boot Camps, educational classes held 6:30–8 p.m. April 1, May 6, and June 3. \$39 per class.

Down and dirty

Snooze – An AM Eatery, 7587 N. Academy Blvd., has launched a Dirty Soda Secret Menu featuring three breakfast-inspired, nonalcoholic dirty sodas, \$3.95 each.

What is dirty soda? It's a trendy way to customize soda with cream, flavored syrups, fruit, or other add-ins. So don't snooze on this — pick your adventure:

- Pineapple Upside Down Dirty Soda (Coke, pineapple juice, vanilla syrup, and signature vanilla cream)
- Strawberry Shortcake Dirty Soda (Sprite, vanilla syrup, house-made strawberry purée, and signature vanilla cream)
- Orange Dreamsicle Dirty Soda (Orange Fanta, vanilla syrup, and signature vanilla cream)

Hours are 6:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and 6:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Details: 719-694-1360.

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