

Written by BY TERRY MATHEWS, News-Telegram Arts Editor
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When choosing a place to eat, we often get stuck in a rut and miss the opportunity to discover new places. We tend to choose our familiar stand-bys instead of branching out to try something different.

The explosive expansion of South Tyler has given rise to a wealth of new eateries, including the elegant Lago del Pino near Chandler and Soju: Sushi Bar and Asian Bistro at the busy intersection of Grande Blvd. and the Old Jacksonville Highway.

Lago del Pino has recently undergone a major overhaul. They've replaced their chef and added several items to the menu, including braised short ribs. Short ribs are this year's trendy item. You know, like bacon and truffles were a few years back.

Ribs were the featured item on a recent Saturday night. They were served in a bowl over a bed of basmati rice and seasonal vegetables.

Some kitchens trim too much fat off the meat before braising, which leaves the finished product dry and flavorless. They don't make that mistake at Lago del Pino. Our ribs were cooked to perfection and well full of flavor.



The restaurant hasn't altered their delicious Crème brûlée recipe, thank goodness. The thin caramel topping is fired just right, offering up a resounding crack with the first bite.

Our favorite Lago del Pino server is Kaitlyn, who has been with the place since it opened early last year. She provides excellent, knowledgeable service without hovering.

Lago del Pino is located on a beautiful private lake at 14706 CR 1134 near the old Kelly-Springfield tire plant. For reservations, which are recommended, call 903-561-5246.

Our most recent Tyler discovery is Soju: Sushi Bar and Asian Bistro.

If you're a fan, you'll find Soju's extensive sushi menu a delight. Try their signature Texas roll (\$12) that features a crab stick, fried onions, carrots and topped with flank steak or the lobster crunch (\$12) featuring lobster tempura, crab mix and asparagus, topped with an incredibly delicious spicy mayo.

But fear not, land lovers. There's something for everyone at Soju, including braised short ribs (\$21), Maple Leaf Farm crispy duck (\$28) and a grilled rib eye steak (\$21).

They also have great Hong Kong noodles (\$12), Pad Thai with chicken or shrimp (\$11) and fried rice (\$10).

Lago del Pino, Soju: Welcome to your new addictions - Tyler's sophisticated, elegant eateries long on flav

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Soju, a traditional Korean distilled beverage, is often served with a variety of dishes, including seafood, meat, and vegetables. The image shows a selection of these dishes, including what appears to be a seafood platter, a meat dish, and some vegetables, all served on white plates. The text below the image is partially obscured and appears to be a mix of Korean and English characters, possibly a title or a short description of the food.