

ON THE SCENE

What's new at Toyota Music Factory

A guide to dining and drinking around the Irving concert venue

By **TINEY RICCIARDI**
Staff Writer
cricciardi@dallasnews.com

If you're a local concertgoer or comedy fan, you've probably heard of Toyota Music Factory by now.

The \$200 million project near the Irving Convention Center is anchored by a live entertainment venue, which opened in September with a christening performance by ZZ Top. But those who made it to that first concert didn't get to see all the complex has to offer. In addition to the convertible music venue, which can seat from 2,500 to 8,000 people, Toyota Music Factory is home to a number of restaurants and bars that are gradually opening.

Here's where to dine and drink if you're headed that way for a show.

Thirsty Lion Gastropub and Grill

With a menu of sandwiches, salads, soups, burgers, steaks, tacos, fish and more, Thirsty Lion has something for just about everyone. The restaurant, which began as a British-style pub in Portland, Ore., in 2006, opened its ninth location in an 8,000-square-foot space at Toyota Music Factory with 24 draft taps for beer and cider. Almost everything is made from scratch, according to the restaurant's owners, from the dressings and soups to the sausages and other meats that are roasted in-house. Specialties include bacon-wrapped barbecue prawns served with coleslaw, and the Gastropub Burger featuring a cheese-stuffed patty topped with maple-pepper bacon, caramelized onions, white cheddar, arugula and horseradish cream.

On a nice day, you'll want to take a seat on one of three patios and sip a house cocktail, such as the grapefruit and basil martini, a mix of Deep Eddy Ruby Red vodka, St. Germain, grapefruit juice, basil, bitters and lime.



Photos by Brandon Wade/Special Contribut

The Gastropub Burger at Thirsty Lion includes a cheese-stuffed patty topped with maple-pepper bacon, caramelized onions, white cheddar, arugula and horseradish cream.

Bar Louie

If you've been to one of Bar Louie's other locations in Dallas-Fort Worth, you know what to expect: dependable bar food with a stiff drink on the side. The same menu of flatbreads, burgers and appetizers is served in Irving, as are the martinis. Grab a classic recipe like the Rat Pack (Grey Goose vodka, Bombay Sapphire gin, dry vermouth and an olive) or one with a modern twist like the Clover (Maker's Mark whiskey, Courvoisier, agave nectar, lemon and orange juice) and head to one of two patios to soak in the sun. Occasionally, the bar also hosts musicians outside, too.

Bar Louie is a great spot to hit after a weekend concert since it's open until 2 a.m. That means you can chill with a nightcap and let the post-show traffic die down



Thirsty Lion offers a wide selection of alcohol, including 24 draft taps for beer and cider.



Ben Torres/Special Contributor

At Bar Louie, diners can expect the same menu of flatbreads, burgers and appetizers offered at the venue's other D-FW locations. Above: Bartenders were in training at the restaurant in September.

before getting a safe ride home.

Freshii

Say you work in Irving and are just looking for a quick lunch. Freshii is a healthy, fast-casual joint that specializes in salads, wraps, bowls and burritos. The Teriyaki Twist bowl, for example, includes brown rice, edamame, won-tons, broccoli, carrots, cucumber, green onions and sesame seeds in a teriyaki sauce. The Tex-Mex burrito wraps up brown rice, avocado, cheddar cheese, black beans,

corn, salsa fresca and Greek yogurt in a tortilla with your choice of protein (falafel, tofu, chicken or steak).

Diners can also treat themselves to a frozen yogurt, juice or smoothie at Freshii. The restaurant lists each food item's nutritional facts on its website.

■ Toyota Music Factory is at 300 W. Las Colinas Blvd., Irving. toyotamusicfactory.com. For more information on Thirsty Lion, Bar Louie and Freshii, visit the restaurant websites: thirstyliongastropub.com; barlouie.com; freshii.com.

Twitter: @tineywrstwatch