

WHERE TO EAT Continued from Front Page



Kandace (@allyoukaneat)



Lauren Nicole Grace (@thehtxhost)

CLASSIFIEDS

SAN JACINTO COLLEGE

For information on doing business with San Jac, go to [www.sanjac.edu/purchasing](http://www.sanjac.edu/purchasing) to view upcoming and previously awarded solicitations, and register in the College's eBidding system (IonWave) to receive notice of future bid opportunities.

HELP WANTED

Project Engineer

Anlyz the construction mtrls eng'g for soils, concrete, asphalt, rebars etc. & other field & lab rsults. Perform geotechnical dsgn & analysis of foundations of various structures inclding pavement dsgns, pile foundation & retaining walls recommendations, slope stability analysis, settlement analysis & prepare final reports. Propose various geotechnical/pavement prjcts & construction materials testing (CMT) of public & private prjcts. Train & coordinate field & laboratory personals. Manage prjct budgets, prjct set-ups, & invoicing. Reqs bach degree in eng'g tech., construction management & Engineering-In-Training license. Mail rsmes to QUARTET ENGINEERS CORPORATION, 2313 W Sam Houston Pkwy N, Ste. 121, Houston, TX, 77043.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Request for Proposal – Houston-Galveston Area Council – Community & Environmental – Livable Centers Study: South Belt – RFP-TRN25-08

H-GAC is seeking qualified contractor services to conduct a study and develop a plan to further the goals of the Livable Centers program in the South Belt area (referred to as “sponsor” or “local sponsor” in this document). The Contractor will develop a plan that addresses the application of the Livable Centers program goals in the specified study area. Since this project requires a range of research, public engagement, transportation, and planning expertise, a team of specialized firms is permitted.

To view/download the solicitation documents visit <https://www.h-gac.com/procurement> or [ESBD \(txsmartbuy.com\)](https://www.esbd.com).

Response Deadline: April 23, 2026 @ 12:00 P.M. CT

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Request for Proposal – Houston-Galveston Area Council – Enterprise Solutions – Rentals – Equipment & Portable Facilities – RN06-26

H-GAC is soliciting responses for the selection of qualified manufacturers, distributors, installers and service providers of Rentals – Equipment & Portable Facilities and to make these types of products and services available to Customers of the HGACBuy Cooperative Purchasing Program under blanket type contracts.

To view the solicitation documents, visit <https://www.hgacbuy.org/bid-notice> or [ESBD \(txsmartbuy.com\)](https://www.esbd.com).

Response Deadline: April 23, 2026 @ 12:00 P.M. CT

HUB Supplier Opportunity

Elevator Transportation Services, Inc. is bidding on Project 26-02-10 for the Houston Independent School District. We are looking for possible HUB subcontractors to provide the following products and/or services.

- Elevator Parts
- Hydraulic Fluid
- Rags
- Soaker Pads
- Lubricants

If you are interested in this opportunity, please contact Kathy at [kevans@etselevator.com](mailto:kevans@etselevator.com) or 713-472-2426 by March 20th.

LEGAL NOTICE

The Houston Independent School District Purchasing Services Department located at 4400 West 18th Street, Houston, TX 77092 is soliciting Request for Qualifications (RFQ) via the District's electronic bidding portal. Proposers may login to view specifications and submit their responses at the following link <https://houstonisd.ionwave.net/Login.aspx> until 10:00 a.m. (CST) Wednesday, April 15, 2026, for the following solicitation:

RFQ 26-02-08 Internal Audit Services

Pre-proposal conference via Microsoft Teams will be held in conjunction with this RFQ. Information regarding dates, times, and instructions to receive a link to join the meeting can be located within the electronic bidding portal under the “Event Details” tab specific to this solicitation.

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo only has a few days left, and when it is all over, officials will begin estimating the overall impact on the Houston economy. Last year, the 23-day event brought 2.7 million guests to the city and generated an estimated \$600 million in economic activity for businesses across the Greater Houston area. With the rodeo coinciding with spring break, Houston has increasingly become a vacation destination during this time of year, with visitors looking for more than smoked turkey legs and funnel cakes inside NRG Park. Many are also exploring the city’s diverse culinary landscape. Whether they are planning weeks before they arrive or searching once they land in the city, many visitors turn to the social media pages of influencers to decide which restaurants should make their itinerary.

Recent industry reports estimate that more than 75 percent of influencers worldwide are women, making them the primary drivers of social media-driven consumer discovery. A 2024 restaurant industry survey found that more than 80 percent of restaurants say social media is their most important marketing tool, with influencer partnerships becoming a major driver of customer traffic. A study using Nielsen InfluenceScope found that Black creators are among the most influential tastemakers online, generating media value scores more than 10 times higher than many of their non-Black peers. Despite their cultural influence online, studies show Black influencers are often paid about 35 percent less than their counterparts, even when they generate similar engagement and audience reach.

That reality makes the voices shaping Houston’s online food conversation even more significant. Last week, Forward Times sat down with Houston-based content creators Lauren Nicole Grace of The HTX Host, Erin Charles of Greedy Girls Guide, Crystal Alexander of Hou Gotta Try This, Tiana of Not That Tiana Taylor, Lorena “Lala” of La La’s Adventures, Iyana of The Mixy Introvert, Kandace of AllYouKanEat, and Lauren Washington of Searching High with Lo.

Sitting in the speakeasy room at Kiss, the women spoke over large wooden cutting boards overflowing with fried chicken, greens, French toast, fruit, smoked applewood bacon, glasses of mimosas, and other sweet and savory brunch dishes from the restaurant’s menu.

For many of the creators, the path into influencing did not begin with a marketing strategy or a business plan. It started with a genuine love of food and a habit of sharing where they were eating with friends.

“I got started about five years ago really just organically,” said Erin Charles of Greedy Girls Guide. “I’m a foodie by heart, so I’ve been eating different cuisines and trying different things since I was a little girl. I was always posting drinks, places, food, and people would ask where I was or what was good. Eventually I created a separate page so I could put everything there.”

Crystal Alexander of Hou Gotta Try This said her journey into content creation grew out of years spent working in hospitality and food service.

“I’ve always been in the hospitality industry. I’m actually a certified culinarian and my degree is in hospitality administration,” she said. “People were always asking me where to go and what to do, so I said let me create a page so I can tell them without responding to a hundred text messages or phone calls.”

Others said the platforms grew out of their own personal curiosity about Houston’s constantly evolving restaurant scene.

“I really just enjoy trying food,” said Lauren Nicole Grace of The HTX Host. “I’m the type of person that doesn’t necessarily have a favorite restaurant because I genuinely like going out and trying new things. I remember watching the Food Network and seeing people trying all these different dishes and thinking I want to do that and tell people about it.”

For all of the women, whether they intentionally set out to build a social media platform or simply found themselves sharing their experiences online, there is a genuine love for Houston’s food scene at the center of what they do. That passion is important because, despite appearances or comments from the outside looking in, much of their work is self-funded. Behind the restaurant visits and carefully edited posts are creators paying for meals, transportation, and production costs themselves in order to keep their platforms active and growing.

“Let me say this on record. I have never received a dime from TikTok,” said Tiana, drawing a chorus of agreement and laughter from around the table. “A lot of people assume creators are getting paid just because a video goes viral, but most of the time that’s not how it works. The money usually comes from brand partnerships or collaborations, not the platform itself.”

“It can be expensive,” said Lauren Washington, who moved to Houston after college and later launched the platform Searching High with Lo. “A lot of the time we’re paying for those experiences ourselves. You’re paying for the meal, the drinks, the parking, everything that goes into creating the content.”

That means being in the game requires an investment, and those who want to succeed have to be savvy, striking a balance between social media

platforms, brand partnerships, and relationships with restaurants. Some of the women have been able to turn their platforms into full-time careers, but many continue to build their brands while also working full-time jobs.

So why do they do it? “I do it because I enjoy exploring the city,” said Lala of La La’s Adventures, who previously built a following traveling throughout the United States before shifting one of her platforms to focus on food in Houston. “Houston has so many places to experience, and it’s fun being able to share that with people who might be looking for something new to try.”

Iyana, who moved to Houston without knowing anyone, initially stayed inside and didn’t explore the city much during her first year. Her page, appropriately called The Mixy Introvert, helped her discover the place she now calls home.



Houston-based food influencers gather at Kiss during a Forward Times interview, with cultural reporter DeVaughn Douglas leading the conversation.

“For me it started with just wanting to explore the city more,” she said. “Once people started engaging and asking questions, it turned into something bigger. Now it feels like I’m helping people connect with Houston.”

If you are going to start a page dedicated to food, Houston is definitely not a bad place to begin. The city has more than 13,000 restaurants, cafés, and bars representing cuisines from more than 80 categories, making it one of the most diverse food cities in the United States. For Kandace, who started her page AllYouKanEat while trying different foods and experiences around the city, that variety was key.



Erin Charles (@greedygirlsguide)



Crystal Alexander (@hougottatrythis)

“Food is something everybody connects with,” she said. “When people see something that looks good, they want to know where it is and how they can go try it. Houston’s food scene is really one of a kind. You can literally eat around the world without ever leaving the city, and that’s something I love showing people.”

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