

## ATHLETE-OWNED RESTAURANTS

Many gridiron and ballpark heroes are branching out to diversify their investment portfolios. Popular athletes open restaurants to create post-career business opportunities. It also gives them a way to show off their athletic victories in the form of jerseys, awards, photos, and other tokens from their glory days. The formula for athlete-owned restaurants is fairly standard: generic pub foods, lots of TVs, and memorabilia covering the walls. The only thing missing is the athlete. Don't expect to find Brett Favre greeting guests at his steakhouse in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

Sports stars have the name-brand recognition to pull in patrons, even after they are no longer living. Some of the country's most popular sports-themed restaurants are named after deceased sports heroes, including Yankee great Mickey Mantle, Green Bay Packer coach Vince Lombardi, and Chicago Cubs' announcer Harry Caray.

Some sports stars branch out beyond the restaurant business. NFL quarterback Vince Young has a steakhouse in Austin and also supplies his own brand of smoked meat to area grocery stores. Some of the most alluring restaurants don't even have the athlete's name on the door. Skateboarding champion Tony Hawk has invested in the Market Restaurant and Bar in California. Menu items that are prepared with organic ingredients, are popular with patrons.

### Follow the Coach's Call

After his NFL football career ended, Dan Marino followed the lead of his

Miami Dolphins coach by entering into the food business. Marino's former coach, Don Shula, owns Shula's Steakhouse. Taking advantage of his fan base, Marino has opened five restaurant establishments around Florida and one in Las Vegas. Chops and steaks are standard menu items. Because the restaurants in Florida are located near the ocean, fresh seafood options are always available. Dan Marino offers the recipes for his favorite menu items on his website.

Athletes of all kinds can raise our expectations, fulfill our dreams, and even dash our hopes. Many remain fan favorites long after their careers have ended on the field. The business-savvy athletes try to extend their careers off the field by starting new business ventures that play off of their popularity. Athletes at all levels of success can open restaurants, but only those with a winning formula will survive, no matter whose name is on the door.

