

Animal Attraction

For local restaurants, it's lions, and tigers, and bears, oh my!

By Lauren Cohen

Think naming a restaurant is simple? Think again.

“It’s as agonizing and thought provoking as naming a child,” says restaurant consultant Arlene Spiegel of New York-based firm Arlene Spiegel & Associates. “Typically, stakeholders go through a number of brainstorming sessions to get it right.”

Foreman Wolf Restaurant Group named two of its six spots after the animal kingdom. The first, Cinghiale, is an Italian eatery whose name translates to “wild boar” in Italian. “You see them all over the Northern part of the country from Tuscany up through Piedmont,” says co-owner Tony Foreman.

When the group decided to rebrand its second Petit Louis location in Columbia earlier this year, Foreman wanted another animal name. The space was transformed into a Roman trattoria named Lupa, which translates to “she-wolf” in Italian.

While there are plenty of ways to successfully play up the animal concept (Spiegel advises putting the descriptive word such as “bubbly cat” for a champagne bar or “Little Red Hen” as a retro bakery does in NYC). However, some species should never be used to name a new spot. “Snakes, spiders, and similarly feared reptiles and bugs should be avoided at all costs,” she says. “They evoke a negative image regardless of the venue.”

When it comes to eateries named after mammals, amphibians, birds, and others, Charm City is turning into a veritable zoo. Here some of the are names that have us crowing:

The Owl Bar: Prohibition-era speakeasy inside the Belvedere Hotel.

Iron Rooster: Breakfast-all-day spot with several locations.

Lobo: Restaurant and cocktail bar whose name, which means “wolf” in Spanish, serves as a nod to the bar’s location on Wolfe Street.

Stalking Horse: Federal Hill staple whose name references the screen that a hunter hides behind when stalking prey.

