

New restaurants unveiled for Metrocentre as hospitality recovery gathers pace

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Shopping centre managers at Metrocentre have announced plans for two new restaurants, as it continues to unveil a raft of changes.

US brand Slim Chickens and Italian bar-restaurant Doppio Malto will soon be opening at the shopping and leisure complex.

First to open, in mid-August, will be Slim Chickens, which is owned by Boparan Restaurant Group which also owns and runs Giraffe, Gourmet Burger Kitchen, Carluccio's and Ed's Easy Diner.

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Earlier this year the group announced plans to accelerate UK expansion of the popular chain, which first launched in Arkansas 18 years ago and now has more than 100 eateries across the US and 10 in the UK.

Slim Chickens, which serves buttermilk-marinated chicken tenders, sandwiches, salads and hot wings in its restaurants, will be creating a raft of new hospitality jobs when it opens

next month in the Upper Qube.

Meanwhile, Doppio Malto, an Italian-based bar and restaurant brand, is also poised to serve up its collection of craft beers, exclusive to its restaurants, alongside hearty Italian dishes in a relaxed and friendly environment.

Doppio Malto currently has 24 restaurants based across Italy and France and the new Metrocentre restaurant, set to open later this year, will be one of the first in the UK



Slim Chickens opens next month at the Metrocentre
(Image: Slim Chickens)

The two new openings come amid a tumultuous period for the hospitality sector, which has been hard hit by the pandemic with many forced to stay closed for more than a year during England's lockdowns, and thousands of businesses now affected by the so-called 'pingdemic' forcing staff to isolate.

The sector had been struggling before the pandemic and, by last August, many high street names had been forced to review their businesses, [launching CVAs and closing branches](#), including Pizza Express, Casual Dining Group, The Restaurant Group, Carluccio's and Bistro Pierre and Byron.

Last month American restaurant chain Coast to Coast also called time on its last remaining North East eaterie, when owners The Restaurant Group decided against renewing the lease – and was forced to close earlier than planned due to staff shortages.

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However, other brands are said to be eyeing the Metrocentre, where [Sovereign Centros took over as asset managers](#) last year, pledging up to £25m in investment.

Other recent arrivals include local independent restaurant Zucchini Pasta Bar, based in the Upper Qube, alongside national brands such as Wagamama, Nando's, Five Guys and Ask Italian.

Ben Cox of Sovereign Centros, senior asset manager for Metrocentre, said: "Both brands have chosen Metrocentre to make their regional debut highlighting the centre's attractiveness as a complete shopping, dining, and leisure destination.

"Slim Chickens and Doppio Malto offer something completely different and will provide visitors with a unique new dining experience."

The new additions will join a raft of other retailers who have opened at the centre since lockdown restrictions were eased in April, including Sky and Tag Heuer.

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