

JUNE 2026

The FIFA World Cup Edition

This June edition of Monthly Musings focuses on the tremendous impact of the World Cup and what visitors – both foreign and domestic – love most about Texas and our Southern culture and cuisine.

All just days before America's 250th birthday, only a few more days away.

Smart Branding: What Visitors Love about Texas

FIFA announced that the World Cup would come to Arlington – don't ask me how it's called "Dallas Stadium" with the audacity to display official graphics that read: "We are Dallas."

And who would have realized that the most sought-after attraction would be 28.8 miles north (which could take the estimated 35 minutes or two hours, depending on traffic)?

[The Fort Worth Report](#) shares that international visitors are flocking to **Buc-ee's**, the mega travel center and general store, so much so that the **Trinity Metro's** Cowtown Visitor Shuttles are taking guests from Fort Worth's Central Station to the Tanger Outlets and Buc-ee's near Texas Motor Speedway **every day** there is not a World Cup match.

With transfers, a visitor staying in Arlington can catch the Arlington Entertainment Cowtown Shuttle to Fort Worth and Buc-ee's.

What a brilliant collaboration among Trinity Metro, the City of Arlington, the City of Fort Worth, and World Cup planners!

Media interviews with international guests consistently reveal that they are overwhelmingly impressed with the hospitality and genuine friendliness of Texans.

Yes, we are teaching these travelers how to speak... TEXAN!



JUNE 2026

Smart Southern Cuisine

International visitors have fallen in love with some expected Southern treats, and one that totally shocked the food world.

After all, the offerings have changed dramatically since Christopher Columbus made his first stop here in 1492, where there was turkey and... well, definitely turkey.

This trip to North Texas has exposed our guests to something we locals take for granted: **Waffle House**. Visitors are dazzled at the popularity and simplicity of our waffles (American waffles, not Belgian!), hash brown bowls, and even steak for breakfast.

One Japanese visitor described his first visit, and the waitress recommended the biscuits and gravy. He said they looked so bland that he wondered if something had gone wrong in the kitchen.

Fox News reports that, after taking a bite of our American delicacy, he offered to "formally apologize to the biscuits, the gravy, the waitress, the kitchen, and the entire breakfast tradition of the American South."

Of course, there's more...since North Texas is home to some of the most legendary barbeque (or barbecue or Bar-B-Q or BBQ, depending on your preference) joints or restaurants in Texas.

BBQ (it's the easiest way to write it) has drawn standing-room only at **Hurtado's** and the new **Original Roy Hutchins craft BBQ** operations in Arlington, as well as my favorite traditional place - **David's**, in Arlington, Terry Black's in Fort Worth, plus **Zavala's** in Grand Prairie.

Capitalizing on the volume of World Cup traffic, Zavala's, which normally opens Wednesday-Saturday, is open seven days a week throughout the World Cup, which plays its last match on July 14.



JUNE 2026

Beyond BBQ, the legendary burger operations are driving visitors into a frenzy. Guests from Japan, Europe, and beyond rave about the **Rodeo Goat** menu that features such toppings as candied bacon, grilled peaches, herb goat cheese, fried onions, and fried egg.

And visitors love our hot dogs, which can be found at event booths and restaurants. It's the ideal time for hot dog-focused dining at **Portillo's** in Arlington, and **Curly's Frozen Custard** in Fort Worth, with its quarter-pound **Nathan's Famous 'dogs**, that continues to show that America's hot dogs beat the bangers & mash and fish & chips from Great Britain.

And sales are going through the roof for area **Chili's** restaurants – the leader in casual dining, and the winning concept that my friend, **Larry Lavine**, created 51 years ago. The \$10.99 special still offers far more value than traditional fast-food options.

When visiting our American fast-food restaurants and many traditional dining options, international travelers are pleasantly surprised with... **FREE REFILLS!**

Here's the shocker of them all: International visitors absolutely LOVE **Ranch Dressing!**

They are also discovering a new love for country music, with one guest saying that he had never heard of **Ella Langley**, and he now hears her on every country music radio station.

The visitor concluded, "She's basically the soundtrack of our trip."



JUNE 2026

More Restaurant and Retail Perspective

[The Fort Worth Report](#) shares that Rex Benson has captured attention at **Rex's Bar & Grill** on University Drive in Cowtown, next to his **Old South Pancake House**, with a giant inflatable soccer ball.

He also hosted 50 guests from the **Japan-America Society DFW** for the June Japan-Netherlands match.

A FIFA-backed study projected that the World Cup would have a \$30 billion economic impact in the United States, **including \$2 billion spent in North Texas**.

And kudos go to Charlie Butler, manager of Soccer Post, an Arlington retailer that sells all sorts of soccer gear. He's been astounded at the pace of sales so far.



JUNE 2026

World Cup from Arlington's Perspective

My friend, [Arlington Mayor Jim Ross](#), appeared on my podcast, [15 on Fridays with Fetch](#), the other day to give an update on how the local businesses are benefiting from the monthlong World Cup visitors.

His observations:

- People are coming from all over the world to **spend money here in our backyard**.
- Arlington is the **only host city during this World Cup to create an Ambassador Row program** that provides consuls from the participating countries to assist any of their citizens who experience any challenges (lost visa, etc.) and who need to speak to someone in their native language they normally speak. The Ambassador Row program was funded by the **City of Arlington**.
- **The City of Arlington collaborated with the Arlington Chamber of Commerce, Arlington Economic Development Corporation, Texas Rangers, Dallas Cowboys, Six Flags over Texas, National Medal of Honor Museum, Texas Live!, Loew's Hotels, and World Cup Task Force to create a seamless experience for visitors to enjoy their stay in Arlington.**
- In the last five years, **13 new World or North American headquarters** have moved to Arlington and created 30,000 new jobs.
- We recently hosted the **inaugural Texas-Japan Economic Summit**, and we're going to host it for at least two more years.
- Arlington is **expanding its Sister Cities program** and will likely add some of the countries whose teams are playing in Arlington for this World Cup.

Oh yes, and you may have read or seen the **10,000-person parade** before the **Netherlands-Japan** match, led by a pair of double-decker orange buses that matched the crowd's orange shirts.

Mayor Ross rode on the upper deck of the lead bus in the parade, which he called "one of the greatest spectacles in my life!"



JUNE 2026

Smart Conquest: OKC Tourism

I was tremendously impressed this past week to see a caravan of three identically marked cars driving in tandem in front of the "Dallas Stadium" on Collins Street. Each bore the message, "**Visit OKC.**"

What a brilliant way to reach an existing crowd looking for fun activities on the off days between soccer matches. After all, the 211-mile trip would take a visitor right past Buc-ee's on the way north to Oklahoma!



JUNE 2026

Tiebreaker: Actually, there are two

- Rebecca and I recently wanted to test out the new **Loew's Convention Center Hotel in the Arlington Entertainment District** about a month ago, and I was dazzled by their extreme hospitality. They had even monogrammed the soap bars and soap dispensers **with my initials, "JF."** I couldn't stop raving about the personalized attention to detail, and she didn't have the heart to tell me that JF stands for the **Julien Farel brand** of hair products and body washes.
- **Invasive, but brilliant: Papa John's is Spying on Your Fridge to Know When You Can Be Influenced to Buy Pizza.** AdExchanger.com reports that the two companies have partnered with **NBC Universal** to capture and benefit from personalized data. Based on your past purchase history, **Instacart** predicts when you will order pizza again and sends you ads on streaming services like Peacock with QR codes for direct pizza orders. **Here's the best (or creepiest) part: Different people are served different ads based on their past product purchases.**

