

# KATY DINING GUIDE

## Mexican Restaurant

### *Los Faroles*

18174 River Sage Drive, #108  
(281) 859-7200

Los Faroles is a one of a kind Mexican Restaurant. Featuring a trendy appearance, which gives you that appeal of being on an island. At Los Faroles you will find quality service, excellent food and drinks of all kinds.

***Excellent Mexican Experience***

## Oilman finds niche with exotic horses

By LILY CHUN

*Discover Katy Correspondent*

Doug Kneis never thought about getting into the horse business. As the owner of an oil field service company called the Mudlogging Co., Kneis was an oilman.

And the man who said he never imagined he would get into the horse business now owns a company called Gypsy MVP, and sells the Gypsy Vanners breed, a rare horse with lush locks and an easygoing temperament like that of a friendly dog.

“People call them ‘golden retrievers with hooves; manes with brains,’ ” he said.

Though Kneis’ parents bought him his first horse when he was 7, he wasn’t able to keep it, and it wasn’t until many years later in 1999 Kneis was able to have another horse. He and his wife decided to move to Katy, and Kneis was unsure until she said the magic words: “It’s an equestrian neighborhood, Doug.”

He said, “That’s how she hooked me. I said, ‘OK, you got me. I don’t have the money, but I’ll do it.’”

Kneis started his ranch with an Arab, a



PHOTO COURTESY OF GERALD R. WHEELER

**‘GOLDEN RETRIEVERS WITH  
HOOVES’:** Doug Kneis raises Gypsy  
Vanners at his Katy ranch.

quarter horse and a Friesian. It wasn’t until he walked into a local store to look for a box of horse treats he found out about the Gypsy Vanner.

On the side of the box was picture of a beautiful black and white horse with a long mane and white tail flowing in the wind.

“I’d never seen anything like it,” Kneis said. “I asked the guy behind the counter if this was a real horse. He said, ‘I have no idea.’”

Kneis called the company that manufactured the horse treats and after speaking with three people, a woman told him the horse on the box was a Gypsy Vanner.

The woman gave him the contact information of a man in Florida who bred

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# GYPSIES: Pretty and strong

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the horses, and from him, Kneis bought a Gypsy Vanner he named Delphie.

“If you buy one of these horses, you’re hooked right then,” he said. “It won’t be your last one.”

At the encouragement of his wife, Kneis began his own Web site to sell Gypsy Vanners, and in 2001, GypsyMVP.com was born. And according to Kneis, all the horses from Gypsy MVP are nothing less than top notch.

“These horses have the wow factor. We don’t even consider buying a horse for us or our customers unless they have the wow factor. They’ve got to put goosebumps on goosebumps,” he said.

According to Kneis, the origin of Gypsy Vanners can be traced to Europe. The horses were bred and raised in secret by gypsies in England and Ireland. Kneis said the gypsies bred local, wild England ponies such as Dales, Highlands and Friesians to draft breeds such as the Clydesdales.

“From the small horses (the breeders) wanted the small, pretty heads and long manes and tails, and from the draft horses, they wanted the beautiful feathering, silky hair down past their hooves,” he said. “These horses look like beefy horses



PHOTO COURTESY OF GERALD R. WHEELER

**BRED FOR STRENGTH:** For about 100 years, Gypsy Vanners were used to pull caravan wagons of the gypsies.

with pretty pony-type heads.”

And the horses aren’t just pretty faces — they’re strong, too. The breed is classified as cold-blooded, which means they are in the draft horse family.

The draft family is a class of horse that has thicker legs, more muscular hind quarters, and stronger chests and necks in order to pull wagons, plows and farm equipment. For about 100 years, Gypsy Vanners were used to pull caravan wagons of the gypsies, and to do so, the horses needed to possess strength as well as a

calm temperament, something these horses are known for.

The cost of a Gypsy Vanner horse ranges from \$10,000-\$100,000. Kneis said many of his customers are wealthy, and he advertises the horses in some of the same places Ferraris are sold. His frequent customers? Wives.

“They tell the husbands to quit buying cars and buy these horses,” he said. “The husband’s got a garage full of expensive cars, and the wives want a barn full of horses.”

## WHERE TO FIND US

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**On the cover:** The 35th annual Katy Tree Lighting Ceremony takes place 5 p.m. Nov. 20 at Heritage Park. Visitors can make Christmas ornaments, write letters to Santa and mail them there, and take photos with Santa for \$5. See story on page 6. **Photos by Vertis Communications. Cover design by Rick Stein.**