



## James David Baron

April 8, 1948 - May 20, 2024

Dallas restaurateur Jim Baron, co-founder of Blue Mesa Grill, dies at 76

Longtime Dallas restaurateur Jim Baron, who founded acclaimed concepts such as the Blue Mesa Grill chain with his wife Liz Baron, passed away on May 20, after a long fight with cancer; he was 76.

The couple, who helped usher in a unique and fresh Southwestern-style variant on Mexican food in Dallas, were a major force in the restaurant scene since starting their company 36 years ago, founding other ground-breaking concepts such as TNT/Tacos and Tequila, Caliente, and Zuma. Baron was born in Brooklyn and earned a PhD in psychology from NYU. He started his career as a therapist but was drawn to starting a business where he felt he could improve lives in a real way.

Prior to opening Blue Mesa in 1988, he spent eight years as an executive with Taco Bell and El Torito Restaurants, Inc. When El Torito founder Larry Cano gave Jim the opportunity to turn around El Torito's failing Texas restaurants, Jim presented Cano with a proposal to change all the El Torito's in Texas to different concepts.

Jim and Liz wanted to develop a concept that was affordable, but had better food, atmosphere, and service than a typical chain restaurant – an important

part of the business model for the Blue Mesa concept.

He wrote the restaurant manager training program for Texas Restaurant Association and was a recipient of the TRA's Restaurateur of the Year award. He was also involved in immigration issues and worked for years with the Texas Business Immigration Coalition to try to improve the status and opportunities for immigrants.

In addition to being an amazing family man and restaurateur, he was a humanitarian, artist, and athlete. He was an avid surfer his entire life, and won third place at the Veterans International Wrestling Championship in the Czech Republic while in his 50's.

He's survived by children Kate (Ian) Stewart and Zak Baron, grandchild Izzy Stewart, and his brother Daniel (Gwyneth) Baron. His memorial will be held on May 24 at 1:30 pm at Temple Emanu-El in the Stern Chapel, 8500 Hillcrest Rd. in Dallas.

In lieu of flowers, please donate to The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society [lls.org](https://lls.org) or the Texas Business Immigration Coalition [texasrita.org](https://texasrita.org).

For questions regarding this document, contact Liz Baron at [lbaron@bluemesagrill.com](mailto:lbaron@bluemesagrill.com) or 214-934-8328

# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

MAY **24**. 1:30 PM (CT)

Temple Emanu-El  
8500 Hillcrest Ave.  
Dallas, TX 75225

# Tribute Wall

MF

“ *Michelle Fowler lit a candle in memory of James David Baron* ”



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**Michelle Fowler** - September 09, 2024 at 01:42 PM