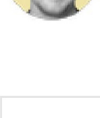


One Holland Group to open \$8M, 10,000-square-foot upscale restaurant in Independence



One Holland is opening an \$8 million steak and seafood restaurant at the Downs of Nicholson in Independence. GARY HOLLAND



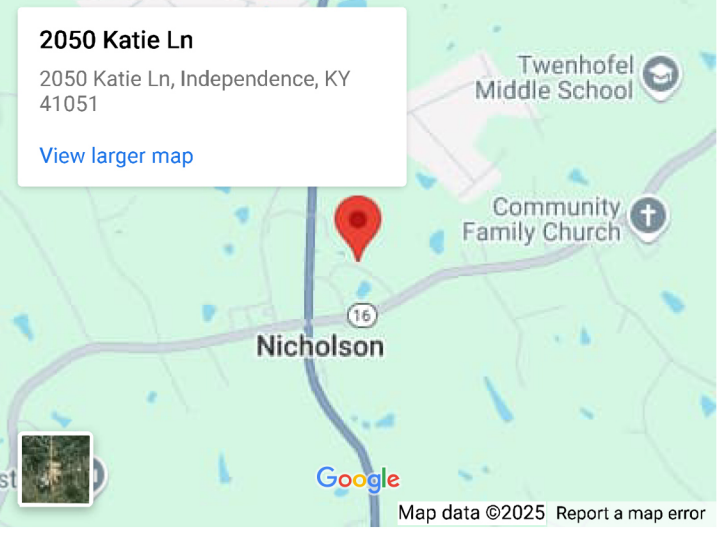
By [Christian LeDuc](#) – Staff reporter, Cincinnati Business Courier
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Story Highlights

- One Holland is opening Royal Kentuckian restaurant in Independence.
- The 10,000-square-foot upscale steak and seafood restaurant will seat 250.
- Royal Kentuckian will feature bourbon bars and Kentucky-inspired decor.

A new upscale steak and seafood restaurant is coming to Northern Kentucky, and the owner behind the concept is offering a preview of the space.

Taylor Mill-based restaurant group One Holland is opening a 10,000-square-foot restaurant called the Royal Kentuckian at its \$54 million Downs of Nicholson development at the northeast corner of state Routes 16 and 17 in Independence. The official address of the restaurant will be 2050 Katie Lane.



The restaurant is going to be the sister store to the famous Merrick Inn in Lexington, Ky., which One Holland acquired in 2021, according to the group’s founder and CEO, Gary Holland.

“I want to re-create – on an even higher level – what we’ve done at Merrick,” he told me.

The Royal Kentuckian will span multiple floors inside a 36,000-square-foot building that will also house a Barleycorn’s Brewhouse, [and a Barleycorn’s, a neighborhood sports bar](#).

One Holland owns both brands.

The new restaurant will seat around 250 people and employ around 230. Official hours have not been set, but Holland said the dining room will serve dinner daily.

He thinks the sea bass dish he and his team are working on is going to be a hit. The menu will utilize ingredients from the commonwealth, including farms throughout the Northern Kentucky region.

“You’ll see a lot of the menu from the Merrick Inn at the Royal Kentuckian plus a few surprises,” Holland said.



Gary Holland is the owner of One Holland

ONE HOLLAND

The restaurant will have three private party/dining rooms and a 50-seat tearoom that will be open in the morning and afternoon.

In addition, the Royal Kentuckian will have three bars, one of which will be made out of wood from deconstructed bourbon barrels. It will feature a massive bottle collection in the hundreds, he said. Holland’s goal is to get the Royal Kentuckian on the list of top 100 bourbon bars in America and on the [B-Line](#), Northern Kentucky’s self-guided bourbon tour.

It will also feature a dusty bottle collection, which will allow guests to order pours of vintage spirits.

“We’ve been able to source some antique bourbons from years gone by (like from) the 1940s, 1950s (and) 1960s,” Holland said.

He acquired roughly half of his vintage bottle collection from Revival Vintage Spirits, [which expanded in Covington in 2024](#).

“I’m telling you, there’s going to be nothing like it in Greater Cincinnati,” Holland said.

His goal is to create a special experience where people can create memories together. “It’s more than just the food,” he added.

The Royal Kentuckian will pay homage to legends with ties to the state, both living and dead. In total, the restaurant will celebrate around 50 people, including three central figures: Muhammad Ali, Abraham Lincoln and Loretta Lynn. According to Holland, the various figures will be displayed around the restaurant with high-end portraits and plaques that honor their contributions.

“There’s so many awesome people that either were born in Kentucky or were raised in Kentucky and made huge contributions to our country,” Holland said.

The restaurant will feature an upscale Jeff Ruby’s Steakhouse-type vibe with a mixture of elegant and casual elements, Holland said.

“There’s going to be areas of the Royal Kentuckian that have white tablecloths and fine dining. There’s also going to be a place where it can be kind of casual, and you’re hanging out at the bar after you get done golfing with a few buddies,” Holland said. “We’re trying to strike that balance.”

The restaurant will also cater One Holland’s event space called the Grand Nicholson, which will be directly across the street within the same development.

One Holland is investing \$8 million into the restaurant. The company’s in-house design team will handle most of the project.

The Royal Kentuckian is just a small part of One Holland’s massive development in Northern Kentucky. The Downs of Nicholson, [which was first announced in 2021](#), spans 60 acres and will feature both commercial and residential elements.

Holland is hoping the commercial side of the Downs will be done in March 2026. In total, it will feature a First Watch, [Spear Ridge Cafe](#), Spear Ridge General Store, Barleycorn’s, Barleycorn’s Brewhouse, the Grand Nicholson Event Center and six rental cabins along with a large guest house that is also available for rentals.

The residential side, which includes 85 rental patio homes, is slated to be complete by fall next year.

Holland said a phase three is also in the works; however, an official timeline has not been announced.

The entire development is being designed to mirror Lexington’s famous horse farms, according to Holland. He’s working with horse barn builder Parker Construction to bring the Downs of Nicholson to life.

One Holland operates multiple restaurant franchises and standalone businesses, including Skyline Chili, LaRosa’s, Dunkin’, [Roney’s](#), [Barleycorn’s](#), First Watch, [the Greyhound Tavern in Fort Mitchell](#) and the Merrick Inn.

Holland wants the Downs of Nicholson to be his company’s flagship project.