Yay M. Rosenberg, Esq. CONLEY ROSENBERG & BRENNEISE LLP Attorneys for Defendant 5080 Spectrum Drive, Suite 850E Addison, Texas 75001 (972) 591-2343 imr@crb-law.com

U.S. DISTRICT COURT MORTHERN DIST. OF TX.

2010 OCT 13 PM 3: LI CLERK OF COURT

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS				
TEXAS HILL COUNTRY BARBECUE, INC., Plaintiff,	: :	Case No.	r_1 7 19	
- against -	:	4 - IOOA	-775-A	į.
HILL COUNTRY IP, LLC,	:			
Defendant.	:			
	X			

NOTICE OF REMOVAL

TO: THE JUDGES OF THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS:

Defendant HILL COUNTRY IP, LLC ("Hill Country"), by its undersigned attorneys, respectfully represents as follows:

- 1. Hill Country is the only defendant in the action now pending in the District Court of Tarrant County, Texas, 352nd Judicial District, Cause No. 352-248480-10 (the "Action").
- The Action was commenced on September 29, 2010 with the filing of Plaintiff's 2. Original Petition ("Petition"), a copy of which annexed hereto as Exhibit A. The Petition was first received by outside counsel for Hill Country via fax on September 30, 2010. A copy of the cover letter from plaintiff's counsel which accompanied the Petition is annexed hereto as Exhibit

- B. Thus, this Notice of Removal is filed within 30 days after Hill Country's receipt of the Petition and is therefore timely filed under 28 U.S.C. §1446(b).
 - 3. There have been no further proceedings in this Action.
- 4. Hill Country has a registered trademark for HILL COUNTRY in International Class 43, which covers "services for providing food and drink" (Reg. No. 3,325,750) and operates the commercially successful and critically acclaimed Texas-style barbecue destinations known as HILL COUNTRY® in New York City, with a new location on the way in Washington, D.C.
- 5. Notwithstanding Hill Country's registered trademark, the Action is a civil action seeking a declaratory judgment that plaintiff, which now plans to open several restaurants, "has, and continues to have a common law right to use its name 'Texas Hill Country Barbecue, Inc.' including the term 'Hill Country' in its name."
- 6. The Action was filed by plaintiff after counsel for Hill Country sent a letter to plaintiff on September 21, 2010 requesting that plaintiff "represent in writing that it will not use nor seek registration of HILL COUNTRY® (or any confusingly similar derivative thereof) in connection with restaurant services and/or in connection with closely related goods and services to [Hill Country's] goods and services (and reasonable product and services extensions thereof)." A copy of that letter is annexed hereto as Exhibit C.
- 7. This Court has original jurisdiction over this Action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1338 since this action relates to Hill Country's registered trademark and plaintiff's infringement thereof and arises under the Lanham Trademark Act, 15 U.S.C. §1501 et seq. Removal of this Action is therefore proper pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §1441.

8. A copy of this notice will be given to plaintiff's counsel and filed with the Clerk of the District Court of Tarrant County, Texas, 352nd Judicial District, as required by 28 U.S.C. § 1446(d).

WHEREFORE, Hill Country prays that the Action now pending against it in the District Court of Tarrant County, Texas, 352nd Judicial District, be removed therefrom to this Court.

Dated: Addison, Texas

October 13, 2010

CONLEY ROSENBERG & BRENNEISE LLP

By

Rosenberg, Esq State Bar No. 17269450

Phillip J. Conley

State Bar No. 04666200

Kelly E. Kleist

State Bar No. 24046229

5080 Spectrum Drive Suite 850E Addison, Texas 75001 (972) 364-9700 (972) 713-6480 facsimile jmr@crb-law.com kek@crb-law.com

ATTORNEYS FOR HILL COUNTRY IP, LLC

Of Counsel:

Philip R. Hoffman, Esq. PRYOR CASHMAN LLP 7 Times Square New York, New York 10036-6569 (212) 421-4100 phoffman@pryorcashman.com

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on October 13, 2010, I served the within Notice of Filing of Removal upon the attorneys for plaintiff, Wesly C. Maness, Esq., Shannon, Gracey, Ratliff & Miller, LLP, 1000 Ballpark Way, Suite 300, Arlington, Texas 76011-5169, the address designated by them for that purpose, by depositing a true copy thereof enclosed in a post-paid wrapper, in an official depository by Certified Mail RRR #7009 2820 0002 9060 3882 under the exclusive care and custody of the U.S. Postal Service within Texas.

Dated: Addison, Texas October 13, 2010

4

CAUSE NO. 352-248480-10

TEXAS HILL COUNTRY BARBECU	JE, INC. §	IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF
Plaintiff,	§	
	§	
	§	TARRANT COUNTY, TEXAS
	§	
HILL COUNTRY IP, LLC	§	
Defendant.	§	352 nd JUDICIAL DISTRICT

PLAINTIFF'S ORIGINAL PETITION

TO THE HONORABLE JUDGE OF SAID COURT:

Plaintiff, Texas Hill Country Barbecue, Inc. ("THCB") files this its Original Petition, complaining of Defendant, Hill Country IP, LLC ("HCIP"), and in support thereof would show the Court the following:

I.

Discovery Control Plan

Discovery is intended to be conducted under Level 2 of Texas Rule of Civil 1. Procedure 190.

П.

Parties

- 2. THCB is a Texas corporation, authorized and doing business in the State of Texas, with its principal place of business being Tarrant County, Texas.
- 3. HCIP is, upon information and belief, a foreign Limited Liability Company with its principle place of business located at 30 West 26th Street, New Your, NY 10010. HCIP maintains no registered agent with the Secretary of State of the State of Texas, and does not appear to be authorized to do business as such, but actively claims rights to do business in the

PLAINTIFF'S ORIGINAL PETITION V:\S - Z\Texas Hill Country Barbecue\pleadings\PetitionDec.doc

PAGE 1

EXHIBIT

State of Texas as evidenced by the controversy in this matter. Service of Process is appropriate by HCIP at its last known address, by serving HCIP through the Secretary of State for the State of Texas.

III.

Jurisdiction and Venue

- 4. This Court has jurisdiction over the Defendant because Defendant claims rights against Plaintiff in Tarrant County, Texas, which it has alleged have been violated and infringed upon in Tarrant County, Texas. Further, THCB is a business that is owned by residents of Tarrant County, in the State of Texas, and the relief sought is authorized by the Texas Declaratory Judgments Act Chapter 37, Tex. Civ. Prac. & Rem. Code.
- 5. All such claimed transactions or occurrences made the subject of the litigation occurred in Tarrant County, Texas. Therefore, venue is proper in Tarrant County.

IV.

Background

- THCB is a Texas corporation with its principle place of business located in 6. Arlington, Tarrant County, Texas. As an entity, THCB has been in existence since 2003. THCB has been operating, utilizing the name Texas Hill Country Barbecue, Inc. continuously for the past seven (7) years, and as result, has acquired common law rights to utilize that name in its geographic area, including Tarrant County, Texas.
- THCB is in the business of providing barbecue products such as brisket, smoked 7. turkeys, smoked hams, whole turkeys, chicken and other refined products generally identified as barbecue.

- 8. THCB primarily provides these products on a wholesale basis to retailers, restaurants and other store front operations for sale and delivery to the retail customer market. THCB is in the process however, of partnering with other entities to continue the natural progression into restaurants and other consumer based markets.
- 9. Recently, HCIP - a company based in and operating in New York City, New York, has claimed a right to sole use of the term "Hill Country" in (among other areas) Texas, in connection with its barbecue restaurant services. HCIP currently provides no services and maintains no restaurants or consumer outlets in Texas at this time, and as stated earlier, was not formed until 2007, four years after THCB was formed as an entity. Further, THCB has learned that HCIP did not even acquire the claimed rights to "Hill Country" until November, 2009. Clearly, THCB was utilizing the term "Hill Country" in its name at least six (6) years before HCIP decided to seek and exclusive claim to use that geographical reference in its name.
- 10. While it is obvious to any Texan that the term "Hill Country" is a geographical reference rather than a trademark-able name, the New York entity apparently is unaware that such a geographical reference in Texas is in broad use by many, many entities, companies and individuals throughout the State of Texas. In fact, by letter dated September 21, 2010, counsel for HCIP submitted what should be considered a cease and desist demand letter to THCB, claiming exclusive rights in the terms "Hill Country," demanding that THCB cease and represent affirmatively that it would no longer use the term "Hill Country" in its name as it operates in Texas – or anywhere else for that matter.

Declaratory Relief

- 12. THCB realleges and incorporates by reference all of the allegations contained in the foregoing paragraphs as if fully set forth herein.
- As a result of the pending threat from HCIP and imminent harm which will result 13. if not resolved as described above, a justiciable controversy exists requiring immediately resolution. THCB requests a declaration of the rights of THCB to keep using its name, as it has been doing for seven (7) years.
- HCIP's letter demand of September 21, 2010, setting down an ultimatum of September 30, 2010 for THCB to cease and desist, and actively represent that it would no longer use the term "Hill Country" in its name for any restaurant or other related purposes creates a pending threat, wherein litigation is eminent. Therefore, it is necessary to settle and afford relief from the uncertainty and insecurity with respect to the rights of THCB and HCIP, with regard to THCB's right to continue its prior and existing seven (7) year use of the geographic term "Hill Country," despite the unsupportable claims and demands by HCIP. THCB requests that the Court issue a judgment declaring that THCB has the common law right to continue use of its name, Texas Hill Country Barbecue, Inc., including the term "Hill Country".

VIII.

Attorney's Fees

14. THCB realleges and incorporate by reference all of the allegations contained in the foregoing paragraphs as if fully set forth herein.

15. As a result of the claims and controversies, and demands made upon the rights of THCB, it has become necessary for a Court to issue a determination of the rights of the parties involved, for which THCB is seeking a declaration that it has the rights to continue use of the term "Hill Country" in its name, which existed years prior to HCIP's formation. To do so, THCB has been required to retain counsel to obtain such declaration and therefore seeks reimbursement of the reasonable and necessary attorneys' fees pursuant to Tex. Civ. Prac. & Rem Code Chapter 37, §37.009 known as the Texas Declaratory Judgments Act.

IX.

Prayer

WHEREFORE, PREMISES CONSIDERED, Plaintiffs, Plaintiff, prays that Defendant, HCIP, be summoned to appear and answer herein, and that upon final hearing hereof:

- Judgment be rendered that THCB has, and continues to have a commom law right 1. to use its name "Texas Hill Country Barbecue, Inc." including the term "Hill Country" in its name;
- 3. Judgment that THCB recover from HCIP all of its reasonable and necessary attorney's fees and expenses incurred herein;
 - 4. Judgment that THCB recover all costs of suit; and
- 5. Judgment awarding THCB all other relief, special or general, legal or equitable, as the Court deems appropriate.



Respectfully Submitted,

WESLY C. MANESS State Bar No. 00784518 SHANNON, GRACEY, RATLIFF & MILLER, L.L.P. 1000 Ballpark Way, Suite 300 Arlington, Texas 76011 (817) 299-2843 (817) 795-4864 (Telecopier)

ATTORNEY FOR PLAINTIFF

REQUEST FOR DISCLOSURE

Under Texas Rule of Civil Procedure 194, Plaintiff requests that Defendants disclose, within 30 days of the service of this request, the information or material described in Rule 194.2(a)-(l).

Wesly C. Maness

SHANNONGRACEY SHANNON, GRACEY, RATLIFF & MILLER, LLP

Wesly C. Maness Direct Dial: 817-299-2843 Email: wmaness@shannongracey.com

Direct Fax: 817-877-8176

September 30, 2010

Via CMRRR - 7008 1830 0000 1591 0609 and Fax - 212-798-6369Brad Rose Prvor Cashman, LLP 7 Times Square New York, NY 10036

> Cause No. 352-248480-10; Texas Hill Country Barbecue, Inc. v. Hill Country IP, Re:

Dear Mr. Rose:

Please be advised that the undersigned has been retained to assist and represent Texas Hill Country Barbecue, Inc. with regard to resolution of the referenced matter. Please direct your future contact and correspondence to the undersigned.

Enclosed is a copy of the lawsuit filed yesterday by Texas Hill Country Barbecue, Inc. The action was filed due to the serious nature of the allegations claimed in your September 21, 2010 correspondence, and my client's firm belief that their prior existing use grants them a common law right to continue. Please let me know if you will accept service of process on behalf of your clients, or if formal service will be necessary.

While we are firm in our belief that Texas Hill Country Barbecue, Inc. is fully entitled to continue its use of the term "Hill Country" as indicated in the attached Petition, and further believe that the geographic term "Hill Country" represents an improperly granted registration, we are hopeful that the parties can work toward a resolution of this matter. However, given the fact that there are literally dozens of restaurants and restaurant service companies in Texas utilizing the term "Hill Country" in their name, and because Texas Hill Country Barbecue, Inc. is a well, longer established entity than your client, we are not willing to simply cease and desist as your correspondence suggests. **EXHIBIT**

September 30, 2010 Page 2

Once you have had a chance to review this correspondence and the attached Petition, please contact me so that we can discuss how best to deal with this matter.

Very truly yours,

Wesly C. Maness

WCM:css

Y:\S - Z\Texas Hill Country Barbecue\correspondence\Rose 09-30-10.doc

cc: Texas Hill Country Barbecue, Inc.

Victor McCall

New York | Los Angeles

7 Times Square, New York, NY 10036-6569 Tel: 212-421-4100 Fax: 212-326-0806

www.pryorcashman.com

Brad D. Rose Partner

Direct Tel: 212-326-0875 Direct Fax: 212-798-6369 brose@pryorcashman.com

September 21, 2010

VIA FEDERAL EXPRESS & FACSIMILE (817) 465-8423

Mr. William Jason Ford President/CEO Texas Hill Country Barbecue, Inc. 3101 Pleasant Valley Lane Arlington, TX 75015

> HILL COUNTRY® (U.S. Trademark Registration; Principal Re:

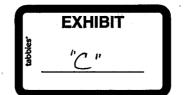
> > Register; United States Patent and Trademark Office; International

Class 43; Reg. No. 3,325,750) (the "Registered Trademark")

Dear Mr. Ford:

We are intellectual property counsel to Hill Country IP, LLC ("HCIP") and write to you with respect to the actual confusion that has resulted and will continue to result from Texas Hill Country Barbecue, Inc.'s ("THCB") use of the designation TEXAS HILL COUNTRY BARBECUE INC (the "Infringing Mark") in connection with restaurant services. As noted above and incorporated herein by reference, HCIP is the owner of the Registered Trademark for use on and in connection with restaurant services. Accordingly, THCB is hereby put on notice that its use of the Infringing Mark (or its intended use thereof, as the case may be), violates the wellestablished trademark rights of HCIP in the Registered Mark. Accordingly, on behalf of HCIP we hereby request that you confirm that THCB will refrain from the use and/or registration of the Infringing Mark.

For informational purposes, please note that HCIP owns and operates the commercially successful and critically acclaimed Texas-style barbecue destinations known as HILL COUNTRY®. The first HILL COUNTRY® restaurant was founded in June, 2007 and is located in the Flatiron District of New York City. From the moment HCIP opened its first location, it was an extremely popular dining and entertainment spot for celebrities, locals and tourists from all over the country (including Texas) seeking a unique and authentic Texas-style dining experience with five star cuisine, live country music, a "down home" "Hill Country" atmosphere and excellent service.





Mr. William Jason Ford Texas Hill Country Barbecue, Inc. September 21, 2010 Page 2

> Building on its success and branded name recognition, HCIP expanded to a second location in New York called HILL COUNTRY® Chicken, serving an updated version of Texas fried chicken and pies. HCIP is also in the process of constructing and opening its third location, a new HILL COUNTRY® branded restaurant in Washington D.C.

> HCIP has expended substantial sums and significant resources over the years building. operating, advertising, promoting, protecting and expanding its HILL COUNTRY® restaurants. HCIP advertises and promotes its HILL COUNTRY® restaurants nationwide through www.hillcountryny.com, MySpace®, Twitter® and Facebook® pages. In addition the HILL COUNTRY® restaurants have received widespread national media attention, including features in The Washington Post, The Dallas Morning News, The New York Times, The New York Post, Michelin Guide, Men's Health Magazine, People Magazine, Crain's New York Business Magazine, Time Out New York, Sky Delta Magazine, Restaurant Hospitality Magazine and Food Network Magazine, just to name of few.

> Indeed, over the years, HILL COUNTRY® branded restaurants have come to symbolize quality in the eyes of the consuming public as a result of its outstanding products, first rate service and vigorous advertising and promotion. Indeed, the HILL COUNTRY® trademark has become so well known to the general public (and to the trade) that it serves to identify HCIP as the unique source and origin of restaurant services under the Registered Mark.

> In light of the above, HCIP believes that THCB's stated intention to use the Mark in commerce in connection with restaurant services will confuse customers into thinking that such services emanate from or are otherwise associated with our client, HCIP, and its HILL COUNTRY® brand. Given that the Infringing Mark is virtually identical to the Registered Mark and will be used in connection with identical services, HCIP believes that consumers are likely to believe that THCB's restaurant(s) is/are affiliated with, connected to, sponsored by and/or associated with HCIP's branded HILL COUNTRY® restaurants. In fact, as is evidenced by the enclosed printout of the THETOPBBQINFO.COM website, actual consumer confusion has already commenced whereby an unrelated third party has juxtaposed HCIP's HILL COUNTRY CHICKEN word mark and logo into a story announcing THCB's listing on the OTC Pink Sheets.

> Accordingly, HCIP requests that THCB represent in writing that it will not use nor seek registration of HILL COUNTRY® (or any confusingly similar derivative thereof) in connection with restaurant services and/or in connection with closely related goods and services to HCIP's goods and services (and reasonable product and services extensions thereof). Your confirmation of the foregoing is required on or before September 30, 2010.

PRYOR CASHMAN LLP

Mr. William Jason Ford Texas Hill Country Barbecue, Inc. September 21, 2010 Page 3

Nothing contained herein or omitted herefrom shall be deemed to be a waiver of any of our client's rights at law or in equity, all such rights being expressly reserved.

BDR/ld

Encs.

CIVIL COVER SHEET

The JS 44 kivi cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON THE REVERSE OF THE FORM.)

<u> </u>	ANALYTI I I TILLIAN ANAMAT E. LAF	1/A		
I. (a) PLAINTIFFS Texas Hill Country Barbed	cue, Inc.	DEFENDANTS Hill County IP, L	LC A NET	D D C A
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	of First Listed Plaintiff		of First Listed Defendant	New York, New York
(E	EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)		(IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES	
			ND CONDEMNATION CASES, U INVOLVED.	SE THE LOCATION OF THE
(c) Attorney's (Firm Nam Wesley C. Maness, SHAN	e, Address, and Telephone Number) INON GRACEY RATCLIFF & MILLER, 1	Attorneys (If Known)	, CONLEY ROSENBER	G & BRENNEISE LLP.
Ballpark Way, #300, Arling	gton, Texas 76011-5169, 817-299-2843	5080 Spectrum D	rive, Suite 850E, Addisor	
II. BASIS OF JURISI	OICTION (Place an "X" in One Box Only)	972-364-9700 III. CITIZENSHIP OF	PRINCIPAL PARTIES	(Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintiff
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	(Indicate Citizenship of Parties in Item III)	Citizen or Subject of a	3 3 Foreign Nation	1 6 1 6
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☐ 120 Marine ☐ 130 Miller Act	☐ 310 Airplane ☐ 362 Personal Injur ☐ 315 Airplane Product Med. Malprac		☐ 423 Withdrawal 28 USC 157	☐ 410 Antitrust ☐ 430 Banks and Banking
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Student Loans (Excl. Veterans)	☐ 340 Marine PERSONAL PROPI ☐ 345 Marine Product ☐ 370 Other Fraud	ERTY Safety/Health 690 Other		☐ 490 Cable/Sat TV ☐ 810 Selective Service
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☐ 195 Contract Product Liability	☐ 360 Other Personal Product Liabil		☐ 864 SSID Title XVI	☐ 890 Other Statutory Actions
☐ 196 Franchise	Injury	& Disclosure Act	□ 865 RSI (405(g))	☐ 891 Agricultural Acts ☐ 892 Economic Stabilization Act
☐ 210 Land Condemnation	441 Voting 510 Motions to Va		☐ 870 Taxes (U.S. Plaintiff	893 Environmental Matters
☐ 220 Foreclosure	☐ 442 Employment Sentence	☐ 791 Empl. Ret. Inc.	or Defendant)	☐ 894 Energy Allocation Act
☐ 230 Rent Lease & Ejectment ☐ 240 Torts to Land	Accommodations Habeas Corpus: 530 General	Security Act	☐ 871 IRS—Third Party 26 USC 7609	☐ 895 Freedom of Information Act
245 Tort Product Liability	Accommodations 530 General 535 Death Penalty	MIMILIAN TONE	26 USC 7609	□ 900Appeal of Fee Determination
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VI. CAUSE OF ACT	Brief description of cause:			ter en
VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:	CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS ACTION UNDER F.R.C.P. 23	ON DEMAND \$	CHECK YES only JURY DEMAND	rif demanded in complaint: : ☐ Yes ☐ No
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