

**ASSOCIATED PRESS**

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Hundreds of Britney Spears' fans waited outside in a fierce thunderstorm for the singer to christen her new restaurant, Nyla.

The restaurant, which opened earlier this month to customers, had its celebrity gala opening on Thursday night.

Guests included former New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, former teen pop queen Deborah Gibson and magician David Copperfield.

Nyla, named for New York and Spears' home state of Louisiana, serves Southern-inspired cuisine. The restaurant is located inside the Dylan hotel at 41st Street and Madison Avenue.

Spears showed up an hour late. She briefly answered questions for a throng of reporters before being whisked inside.

When one asked why the 20-year-old superstar, who earlier this year branched out into acting, was opening a restaurant, Spears replied, "Why not?"