

Cornucopia copy

The Register - Guard - Eugene, Or.

Author: Tim Christie The Register-Guard

Date: Feb 28, 2009

Start Page: D.21

Text Word Count: 699

Document Text

Note: Owners of the popular Eugene restaurant adding a second location

Goodbye, escargots bourguigonne, steak Diane and oysters Rockefeller. Hello, Cheezy American Burger, Olivia's Onion Rings and Father Phil's Phat Fish & Chips.

In a sign of the times, the owners of Cornucopia restaurant at 17th and Lincoln are opening a second location in the Fifth Street Market district in the space once occupied by Chanterelle, a fine-dining establishment that closed last August.

"We are in the hamburger movement of the Recession of 2009," Cornucopia co-owner Alison Albrecht said Friday.

While many restaurants are struggling in the economic downturn, Albrecht and her partner Nils Stark say their midtown restaurant is doing a great business, built on massive burgers, homey comfort food and a wide selection of Northwest beer and wine in a cozy, neighborhood setting.

It's not uncommon for people to wait 40 minutes on a weeknight for a table in the 75-seat dining room, Albrecht said.

There was no room to expand the restaurant, so they started looking for another location, and settled on the old Chanterelle space.

"It's got character and it's funky," Stark said.

While the state of the economy is cause for concern, Stark said, "One of the things that inspired us to do this is our existing restaurant is so busy. It gives us a reason to be optimistic."

They're renovating the 2,000-square-foot space at Pearl Street and E. 5th Ave. now, painting and cleaning the place and installing all new kitchen equipment. While they're doing much of the work themselves, the partners will spend about \$115,000 to get the restaurant open, Stark said. The plan is to open March 31, with a grand opening April 3. Albrecht's father, Philip Calandra, also is a partner in the new enterprise.

They considered other names and concepts - including the Corn or the Corn Bar - before settling on Cornucopia Burger & Bar, Stark said.

The menu will essentially be the same as the one offered at the original Cornucopia, Albrecht said. That means hand-made, half-pound burgers made with locally grown beef, hot and cold sandwiches, steaks and ribs, and comfort food such as pot pie and macaroni and cheese. Breads and soups are made from scratch. Prices range from \$5.95 for a grilled cheese sandwich to \$19.99 for a full rack of baby back ribs.

One difference is the new Cornucopia will have a bar selling hard alcohol.

"For years, Alison and I wanted to do a full bar," Stark said.

The restaurant's entry will be off Pearl Street, across from the Steelhead, instead of Fifth Street. The new Cornucopia will employ about 30 full- and part-time workers, Albrecht said.

The new restaurant represents a new challenge for its owners. The first Cornucopia began 17 years ago as a bottle shop and deli on Monroe Street, near 11th. It moved to its current location 10 years ago and evolved from a market and deli to a full-service restaurant.

Surrounded by a residential district, the original Cornucopia is very much a neighborhood joint.

The new Cornucopia, meanwhile, will find itself in the middle of a restaurant row of sorts, with competition from the Steelhead brew pub, Lucky Noodle, Jo Feds and Fifth Street Market across the way.

While the competition may be stiffer, having all those restaurants in the same neighborhood draws people in, Stark said.

For more than 20 years, the space was home to Chanterelle, a restaurant that received national recognition and

featured old-school, continental-style cuisine. Operated until 2006 by chef-owner Ralf Schmidt, the restaurant had a long-standing reputation as one of Eugene's best restaurants, and was ranked as the 37th best restaurant in the country in a 1994 survey of readers of Conde Nast Traveler magazine.

New owners Kurtis and Kelly Keller took over on New Year's Day 2007, hoping to continue Schmidt's vision with a new chef, but the restaurant closed last August, Kelly Keller said. They listed the business with Justin Schmick of Windermere Commercial, Downtown landlords Tom Connor and Don Woolley own the building.

"We were probably one of the first ones to suffer from the economy," Kelly Keller said. "Suddenly it slowed down and came to a screeching halt."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.

Abstract (Document Summary)

"It's got character and it's funky," [Nils Stark] said.

They're renovating the 2,000-square-foot space at Pearl Street and E. 5th Ave. now, painting and cleaning the place and installing all new kitchen equipment. While they're doing much of the work themselves, the partners will spend about \$115,000 to get the restaurant open, Stark said. The plan is to open March 31, with a grand opening April 3. [Alison Albrecht]'s father, Philip Calandra, also is a partner in the new enterprise.

"We were probably one of the first ones to suffer from the economy," [Kelly Keller] said. "Suddenly it slowed down and came to a screeching halt."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.