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New Eatery at Old Petar's Location

By Cathy Tyson

Goodbye Petar's, hello The Cooperage - an American bar and grill, in Petar's former location on Lafayette Circle. With Andrew McCormick at the helm, the son of Bill McCormick of seafood restaurant chain McCormick and Schmick's fame, expectations are high for the new restaurant tentatively slated to open in the late summer. The chain now has more than 80 restaurants nationwide, from Oregon to Rhode Island, with their closest location right in Berkeley - Spenger's Fresh Fish Grotto. Lafayette resident McCormick used to run the City Tavern on bustling Fillmore Street in San Francisco's Marina district for more than a dozen years.

Petar's former patrons can look forward to a welcoming bar with flat screen televisions, along with a family friendly, but upscale casual menu with mainstream favorites including steak, seafood, chicken and pork coming from the open kitchen with large rotisserie grill. But before the oysters Rockefeller hits tables, a substantial remodel will be in the works.

What's a Cooperage? It's the bar where McCormick's parents first met, according to Diablo Magazine. Although the word was new to this reporter, cooperage also refers to the facility in which a "cooper" -someone who makes wooden staved vessels such as casks, barrels and the always handy butter churn- works. Surely head chef Eric Hopfinger, who has had stints at Jake's on Market, Circa, and Long Bar and as a contestant on "Top Chef" will be putting his culinary chops to work grilling the perfect steak and not barrel-making.

Reach the reporter at: cathy@lamorindaweekly.com

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