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Brothers Public Kitchen opens in Theatre Square

By Sora O'Doherty



Co-owner Blair Bagneschi mixes cocktails at Brothers Public Kitchen, formerly Piccolo Napoli in Theatre Square. Photos Sora O'Doherty

contingent on it being transferred to the new owners. The brothers consider themselves fortunate to have the license; the transfer process was huge, they say, and took many months. There is nothing really the same about the restaurant as it is now when compared to Piccolo Napoli. The space has been completely remodeled from top to bottom, all of the recipes are different from the old menu, and, according to Blair, they have introduced a craft cocktail program that is unique to Orinda.

Blair explained that they make pasta fresh every day as well as fresh sauces. One dish, linguine and clams, features black pasta made with squid ink. Their menu also includes some dried pastas.

Jason said that Piccolo Napoli was previously limited to just pizza and pasta. The Bagneschis will continue to sell pizza, but it will be Neapolitan-style, 12-13 inches in diameter, and the dough will be made fresh every day. They want to focus on regional specific pastas. "Our family comes from Tuscany, our mother is from Lamarche, more northern Italian." Rather than just generic, they want to be specific to a region and to showcase family cooking, including some personal family recipes.

The menu reflects "a couple of Italian-American kids who grew up in California." Their goal is to be as local as possible, sourcing ingredients from about a 100-mile radius. They would like a lot of menus to showcase one farm or one particular person, but right now, COVID-19 has made it hard for them to do what they want to do. Eventually they hope to champion small farmers, dairies, etc.

For the brothers, the beauty of Italian food is that it is hyper-locality-based, region to region, town to town. "Everyone will tell you how they do it and how it should be done," Jason says. Their philosophy is that if ingredients are the freshest and most local, they will taste great and shine through. What's in season? What is at the farmers' market? That will inform their menus.

Jason and Blair both live in Concord, first generation Italian on their father's side, third on their mother's side. Their great grandfather lived in Collinsville, on the Delta, about an hour from Orinda. Their grandmother grew up there and their grandfather was a fisherman.

Brothers Public Kitchen is located at 2 Theatre Square in Orinda, and is open for dinner currently, Tuesdays through Sundays. Dining inside is allowed to 25% capacity, as well as takeout and curbside pickup. Happy Hour is 3 to 5 p.m. with a special menu and dinner service starts at 5 p.m.



Two brothers from Contra Costa County with a lot of bar and restaurant experience who purchased Piccolo Napoli restaurant in Theatre Square have remodeled and reopened the restaurant under the name Brothers Public Kitchen. The restaurant features Italian food, including pizzas and pastas, as well as dinner entrees.

Blair Bagneschi worked most recently as a bartender in Concord and has worked at the Walnut Creek Yacht Club, Va de Vi, and Pizza Antica. Jason Bagneschi previously worked at a number of restaurants, including Wayfare Tavern, Quince, Cotonga, and Chow. Both brothers are graduates of De La Salle High School. Blair graduated from Northern Arizona University with a degree in Hotel Restaurant Management, and Jason obtained a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Utah.

The brothers are concentrating on family meals, some featuring Bagneschi family favorites. The restaurant has a full liquor permit, and the sale of the business was

Diners enjoy dinner al fresco at Brothers Public Kitchen in Theatre Square. Photos Sora O'Doherty

Reach the reporter at: sora@lamorindaweekly.com

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