

Food

San Francisco Chronicle

Big changes rolling in as Fog City starts anew



Lance Iversen, The Chronicle

Bruce Hill

By Paolo Lucchesi

August 15, 2013

Fog City Diner (1300 Battery St.) was a place that, for much of its 25 years of business, held an almost patriotic place on the San Francisco landscape. It was the apple pie of the Embarcadero, a place whose legend was furthered through 1980s Visa commercials and Farley comic strips.

With its neon sign lighting up the corner and a once-innovative concept, Fog City Diner - which closed in the spring - was as much an essential part of the city as any other restaurant in town.

As the same owners prepare for a September unveiling of their revamped version of the restaurant - now simply named **Fog City** - they know history looms in the background.

"Fog City Diner was such an integral part of the city. We feel an inherent responsibility to maintain that importance," says partner Bill Higgins, who opened the original. "We're making a run at a new quarter-century."



The iconic sign is a goner, already replaced by a new one in bright-blue letters; look for it to be relit by the end of the month. Designer Michael Guthrie has also redone the entire 165-seat interior, opening up the space as one big room.

Diner-ectomy aside, the biggest change will be in the kitchen.

"The new Fog City defines the new San Francisco. It's a restaurant that is proud of its place," says Bruce Hill, the restaurant's new chef and partner, who has had the magic touch at his other two San Francisco restaurants, Bix and Zero Zero.

Hill redesigned the physical kitchen himself, anchoring it with a 7-foot-wide custom-built wood-burning grill. He'll be joined there by his longtime right-hand chef at Bix, **Erik Lowe**.

The wood-fired component will play prominently on the menu, which Hill describes as personal - "the food I love to eat."

The fire isn't the only new toy in the Fog City kitchen. Hill, along with Bix pastry chef **Aaron Toensing**, is bringing in a custard machine from Wisconsin, and will use Straus Creamery milk to create what Hill calls - tongue slightly in cheek - "San Francisco's first custard program." Also on the sweets side, a dedicated doughnut station will fry crullers every 15 minutes.

And for those wondering, Fog City *will* take American Express this time around.

Version 2.0: Tyler Florence's **Wayfare Tavern** (558 Sacramento St.) exploded onto the scene 3 1/2 years ago. Since day one, the popular restaurant has been a tough reservation, though Florence has continued to refine his San Francisco flagship.

Now, he's got a fresh regime running the show. Florence's new executive chef is **Joey Elenterio**, who earned Chronicle Rising Star honors and a Michelin star while at Chez TJ in Mountain View; on the other side of the line, front-of-house whiz **Bobi Adle** (Frances, Manresa) is the restaurant's new general manager.

Applying Torc: Downtown Napa's former **Ubuntu** - dark since 2011 - has new life. Chef **Sean O'Toole** has claimed the stylish restaurant space (1140 Main St.), and will resurrect it as an entirely new concept named **Torc**.

O'Toole says the name is a reference to the Gaelic word for wild boar. But, the restaurant won't be Irish - he describes the theme as casual, contemporary American.

With an October opening in his sights, he plans to keep much of the dining room's distinct look intact.

Flying high: Ladies and gentlemen, **Daniel Patterson's** upcoming Mid-Market project (1420 Market St.) has a name: **Alta CA**.

Set a skip away from the Twitter building, the casual restaurant and bar takes its name from several sources. Not only was it the northern California counterpart to the Mexican territory of Baja California, but also Alta California was the name of a bygone 19th century San

Francisco newspaper that employed a travel writer named Mark Twain.

Patterson - the chef behind four-star Coi in San Francisco and the Oakland triumvirate of Plum, Plum Bar and Haven - is hoping to unveil his new spot this fall, around the same time he'll publish his Coi cookbook.

Spin city: Alta CA isn't the only high-profile sequel en route.

Acquerello's downscale Italian offshoot, **1760** (1760 Polk St.), is also quickly nearing. The latest news from that front is that **Gianpaolo Paterlini** and company have found a bar manager: **Christopher Longoria**.

For the last several years, Longoria has been working at Aziza, the Richmond District neo-Moroccan destination with some of the finest cocktails in town. Look for him to carry over the same produce-driven philosophy at 1760's bar.

Wheeling and dealing: **Ferry Plaza Seafood** has inked a deal for a new location in North Beach's former Pasta Pomodoro space (655 Union St.). The exact concept is not finalized, but the lease is signed. Unlike the original location, there will be a full kitchen, which should allow for dinner service.

What's uncertain, however, is whether Ferry Plaza Seafood will keep its spot next to Hog Island in the Ferry Building. According to the Ferry Plaza Seafood's Joey Ng, the Ferry Building landlords are asking for four times the current rent, and they are in negotiations.

Paolo Lucchesi is a San Francisco Chronicle staff writer. E-mail:

plucchesi@sfchronicle.com Twitter: **@lucchesi**

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