

Fog City Leaves Its Diner Past For A Wood-Fired Future

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Carolyn Alburger | Photo: Heimo Photography | September 20, 2013

French crullers, cocktails, and more at the waterfront's newest oldest restaurant, re-opening today.



The Inside Job cocktail.

"My chef figured out how to make American cheese," said Fog City's chef-partner Bruce Hill (Picco, Bix, Zero Zero), almost giggling, as he escorted me through the new state-of-the-art kitchen at Fog City. He and his partners built this kitchen as part of their [ambitious revamp](#) of the old, iconic diner, which had been operating out of the same Embarcadero space since 1985; was made famous by various pop-culture appearances; and will re-open Monday. That cheese? It'll be holding court on top of a Brandt beef burger and a house-made "sweet American" bun. "It's like In-N-Out, but 100% made in-house." And it's not the only thing that'll be new at Fog City.

Under the direction of designer [Michael Guthrie](#), the contractor broke down the structure's central support wall—a risky and costly endeavor that opened up the Flatiron of a space, so you can see from one side of the dining room, straight across the bar to the other side. The new design features [1958-era Cherner chairs](#) that flank a communal table; a LED-underlit faux onyx bar; and extra-long, cushy brown leather booths, which will almost make communal dining a given.

Although some have feared the loss of Fog City Diner's retro charms as part of the refurbishing, Guthrie has found a way to preserve them while modernizing the space. Don Draper would fit in here, and if he looked to the right, his steely gaze would rest on the flickering flames in Bruce Hill's custom-made wood-fired grill, another first-time Fog City creation. "Nobody's got anything like this," Hill gushes out of the side of his mouth, eyes a-twinkle.

Its power will put forth fire-kissed cherrystone clams, a glistening whole chicken with crispy potatoes, and even tomatoes for a "wood-grilled tomato soup"—a far cry from the old Fog City's diner fare, but a menu Hill is confident will bring in new customers without alienating the restaurant's old ones.

And there are more fun conversation points for you to remember for your first visit to Fog City. Hill and his pastry chef Aaron Toensing took a course at the [Frozen Dessert Institute](#) in Missouri to learn the art of frozen custard making. In true San Francisco form, they've turned these skills (quite literally) into an all-organic [Straus frozen custard](#), available doused in egg yolk caramel. "That was a late night creation," Hill chimes in. He's also brought in another one of his all-time favorite foods: French crullers. See them bubbling away in the fryer in the gallery above, and do take a stroll through the rest of the pictures for a first glimpse at the new [Fog City](#).



The new façade.



Fog City chef-partner
Bruce Hill.



No pizza will be made
in this wood-burning
oven.





The custom-made
wood-fired grill.



Wood-oven chicken.



Frozen custard with
egg yolk caramel.

