

I N S A T I A B L E

BY CELESTE McCALL

Having dug ourselves out from yet another major snowfall, we are keeping track of goings-on in our 'hood. (We're also thankful for Metro; as I write this, our Toyota is still buried under two feet of snow.)

It looks like 14th Street NW will soon become Washington's newest "restaurant row," with more eateries joining Posto, Masa 14, Cork (and Cork Market), and Bar Pilar among other favorites. Here's what's been happening: We've been monitoring the progress of Estadio, the future spinoff of Penn Quarter's Proof, set to open at 1520 14th St. NW (14th and Church), in the site vacated by the Garden District plant store. Estadio (Spanish for "stadium"), is expected to arrive this summer, possibly in June. Not surprisingly, the restaurant/wine bar's open kitchen will dispense Spanish-style tapas, bite-size pintxos, and larger raciones, created by Proof top toque Haidar Karoum.

The newcomer will accommodate about 100 guests, with 20 seats at the two-sided bar in the center and 85 in the dining room, including three communal tables. One bar corner will be devoted to Spanish meats, cheeses and cold small plates, according to proprietor Mark Kuller. Estadio will initially serve dinner only but will eventually add lunch and brunch. www.proofdc.com.

More Newbies

Diamond District Seafood Co. is set to debut at 1608 14th St. NW. Sustainable seafood advocate Barton Seaver (who helped launch Georgetown's Hook) is joining forces with fellow restaurateurs Eli Hengst (formerly of Capitol Hill's Sonoma) and



Eggplant Tapa's at Masa 14. Photo: Chris Banks

Douglas Singer to open a combination seafood market and restaurant. Designed by Core Inc. (Wisconsin Avenue NW), the 6,700-square-foot restaurant will accommodate 125 inside, plus patio seating. Construction has been delayed, but things should get going by early spring.

Also set to open later this year is Table 14, at 1832 14th St. NW, a "farm to table" eatery.



Masa 14's beef tostada and crab wonton – just two of the many small plates on the menu. Photo: Chris Banks

(It will be a spinoff of the popular Local 16 on nearby U Street NW.) The main floor will focus on American cooking with an Italian twist, the second story will have a yakitori grill and bar, and the top floor will host private gatherings. Capping everything off will be a small roof deck. Ah well, spring will come.

Masa14 – Beyond Eggs

On a recent rainy Sunday, we found ourselves in Logan Circle after dropping off clothes at the Haitian Embassy for earthquake survivors. We were curious about Masa's innovative Sunday brunch, where chef Antonio Burrell's eclectic culinary lineup presents a refreshing change from the usual eggs, eggs and more eggs. However, Masa 14 does provide a quiche-of-the-day, scrambled eggs and a few other such options. Cold, wet and hungry, we parked our dripping umbrellas by the door and entered Masa 14's seductive, brick-lined space with concrete floors, open kitchen and woodburning oven.

We began our repast with tongue-tingling Bloody Marys, concocted behind the cement-topped bar. Then we ordered our "small plates," starting with a bacon/gruyere breakfast pizza topped with pico de gallo, arugula and a raw egg (we would have preferred the latter cooked slightly); chicken salad crunchy with cabbage and crisp noodles; yucca beef brisket hash; petite ham mini-quiche; side order of grits with cheese. As portions are very small, each person needed about three plates.

If we had a complaint, we found the service al-

most too fast, as our parade of mini dishes arrived almost non-stop, appearing before we had a chance to taste their predecessors. Lunch for three of us came to \$65, including tax and tip. We'll be back. Masa 14's Sunday brunch goes from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

And...

Good news for theatergoers: Masa 14, situated just three blocks from the Studio Theatre, has unveiled pre-theater dining. Served Monday through Thursday from 5 to 6:30 p.m., the menu presents a choice of any three dishes on the Latin-Asian menu (except black cod and wagyu beef brisket). The \$24.95 deal also includes a glass of house wine or strawberry lemonade. Tax and gratuity is extra. Eclectic "fusion/small plates" encompass fried oysters in Bibb lettuce cups with pickles, tomatoes and chili remoulade; garlic-spiked chicken wings served with teriyaki and sambal (a fiery chili-based Indian condiment); Kobe beef and pork meatballs with cheese, scallions and smoked tomato yuzu sauce; beef tostada with peanuts, bean sprouts, cheese and guacamole.

There's more: Monday is Jazz Night at Masa 14. From 7 to 11 p.m., guests may unwind in the dining room or lounge while enjoying live music from Charles Rahmat Woods, aka Rahmat Shabazz. Masa 14 is the joint effort of Kaz Okochi, who operates his stylish Kaz Sushi Bistro downtown, and Richard Sandoval, whose well-received culinary repertoire includes Penn Quarter's Zengo.

Open daily, Masa 14 is located at 1825 14th St. NW. For reservations call 202-328-1414 or visit www.masa14.com. As parking can be a hassle (except for Sundays), we recommend using the U Street/African-American/Cardozo Metro stop (Green/Yellow line). ★

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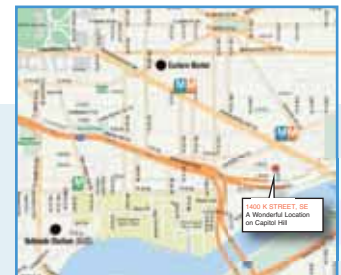
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