

Former Dave's Gets New Tenant Staunton-Based Restaurateur Tight-Lipped About Plans

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HARRISONBURG — The new tenants of the former Dave's Downtown Taverna are being tight-lipped so far about their plans for downtown Harrisonburg's largest dining space. Officials announced on Monday that Staunton-based restaurateur Jeff Ramsey and his associates will move into the 6,500-squarefoot building at 121 S. Main St., which has been vacant for about seven months. Ramsey and his business partner, Steve Kiracofe, own Byers Street Bistro and Sauced in Staunton and The Palms in Lexington.

Ramsey has not disclosed the name of the new restaurant or what its menu will entail. He could not be reached for comment Monday.

Construction is expected to start in the spring with a target opening date some time this summer.

Ramsey publicly announced the new restaurant through the revitalization group Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance, though word had gotten out previously that he would take over the Dave's space.

"We are introducing a new concept, created specifically for the Harrisonburg market," he said in a news release from HDR.

In the release, Ramsey says he had worked with HDR "for several years to find a suitable site in downtown Harrisonburg."

"We love the characteristics of historic downtown areas, including the strong community support that is associated with them," he added.

Byers Street Bistro, which frequently hosts live music, has a menu that includes pizza, burgers and sandwiches for lunch, and dinner entrees that range from chicken and waffles to shrimp and grits to fish tacos.

Sauced serves up craft beer, sandwiches, pizza and calzones, while The Palms has sandwiches, burgers steaks and pasta.

Harrisonburg businessman Giles Stone, owner of the former Dave's building, said Ramsey's reputation played a factor in the decision to lease the restaurant to him.

Several restaurateurs from inside and outside the Valley expressed interest in the property, Stone said.

“They are very competent and very well respected in the food industry, and I think they’ll bring a lot of interest to the downtown,” he said.

The Dave’s Downtown Taverna building has remained vacant since Dave’s, a longtime staple of the downtown dining scene, closed its doors in July amid financial troubles.

Owner Dave Miller unsuccessfully tried to restructure his business under Chapter 11 bankruptcy proceedings, which he filed in December 2012.

Miller also owned Dave’s Taverna Express on Port Republic Road, which he also closed in July and reopened at another location on Port Republic Road in January.

In September, Stone bought the Dave’s building through foreclosure. He said at the time that his goal would be to bring a new restaurant to the space.

In the release, Eddie Bumbaugh, executive director of HDR, said Ramsey “has a wonderful track record managing creative, fun restaurants with quality food and service.

“We believe this restaurant is going to be a huge asset to downtown,” he said.

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