

THE BOSTON GLOBE

Founded 1872

RICHARD H. GILMAN, *Publisher*

MARTIN BARON, *Editor*

HELEN W. DONOVAN, *Executive Editor*

RICHARD J. DANIELS, *President and General Manager*

October 15, 2006

New destination dining: South Boston Seaport

By Alison Arnett and Thomas C. Palmer Jr.

GLOBE STAFF

As the sprawling South Boston Seaport district begins to fill out Boston's skyline, one thing is certain: No one will be in danger of going hungry.

From California trendy to sophisticated French cuisine to Brazilian-style grilled meats, at least 60 restaurants could fill the blocks of the Seaport and adjacent Fort Point Channel neighborhood.

About 20 restaurants are open, or will soon be, including an as-yet unnamed one by chef Mark Allen, owner of Newton restaurant Le Soir, who expects to have his new place on Congress Street open by next spring. While many of the others are in the conceptual stage, real estate and restaurant industry people expect most of them will get built because developers of the large projects in the Seaport are reserving spaces in their proposed buildings for places to eat.

On Fan Pier, for example, developer Joseph F. Fallon has space for five restaurants, while across Northern Avenue, developer John B. Hynes III has sketched plans for six.

The restaurants are taking on a certain style that fits their new locations. In the Seaport, with its expansive blocks and contemporary buildings sited for water views, the planned restaurants will tend to be sleek and modern, probably large, and possibly will include national restaurants such as Fleming's Prime Steakhouse. Restaurants in hotels, such as Georges Bank in the Renaissance Boston Waterfront Hotel, Legal C-Bar and Grill in the new Westin Boston Waterfront Hotel, and several others will be geared toward conventioners and tourists, as well as locals.

In the Fort Point area, a neighborhood of 19th-century brick buildings in a tighter, more intimate street pattern, the restaurant and retail spaces will more resemble the South End, with its mix of small and larger eating places. Joanne Chang,

THE BOSTON GLOBE

Founded 1872

RICHARD H. GILMAN, *Publisher*

MARTIN BARON, *Editor*

HELEN W. DONOVAN, *Executive Editor*

RICHARD J. DANIELS, *President and General Manager*

October 15, 2006

New destination dining: South Boston Seaport

By Alison Arnett and Thomas C. Palmer Jr.

GLOBE STAFF

owner of the South End's Flour Bakery & Cafe, plans a second on Farnsworth Street, to open in December. No. 9 Park's Barbara Lynch plans three "concepts" in a Congress Street development.

When completed, the combined Seaport-Fort Point area could become Boston's biggest dining destination. It already has the

Boston Convention & Exhibition Center, the new home of the Institute of Contemporary Art is scheduled to open as soon as next month, and several hotels have opened or are under development.

But this won't be solely a playground for tourists and conventioners. Boston city officials have for years said they want the area to be for locals, too, and have pushed for mixed-use projects that will add residents, office workers, and shoppers by the thousands. Among Fallon, Hynes, and other

developers there are some \$6 billion worth of office buildings, residences, hotels, and retail facilities coming to the district.

The restaurants should add to the area's liveliness, much like Back Bay hums both day and evening. "Landlords are trying to attract people to the area," said Michela Larson, co-owner of Rialto in Cambridge and blu, near Downtown Crossing. "If you put restaurants there, they will come."

The new Park Lane Seaport apartment building has a Legal Test Kitchen restaurant. By early next year, Salvatore's, a mid-priced Italian restaurant, will be open, along with several smaller places. The Institute of Contemporary Art will offer California-style cuisine at

Wolfgang Puck's Water Cafe when the museum opens. And by next year, the Legal C-Bar and Grill -- what restaurateur Roger

THE BOSTON GLOBE

Founded 1872

RICHARD H. GILMAN, *Publisher*

MARTIN BARON, *Editor*

HELEN W. DONOVAN, *Executive Editor*

RICHARD J. DANIELS, *President and General Manager*

October 15, 2006

New destination dining: South Boston Seaport

By Alison Arnett and Thomas C. Palmer Jr.

GLOBE STAFF

Berkowitz calls "an oyster bar on steroids" -- will open in the Westin hotel, where Saucy is open.

The flurry of interest by restaurant owners marks a turning point in the area, said Pat Paladino, vice president of the real estate firm Meredith & Grew/Oncor. "One or two groups take the plunge in the market, and it starts to legitimize it." Then the area becomes "a dining destination," he said.

Several of the area stalwarts also are making plans. The Athanas family, owners of the iconic Anthony's Pier 4, intends to open a new version of the restaurant on the narrow parcel where the current Anthony's sits.

"There will always be an Anthony's Pier 4," said Paul Athanas, youngest son of the late Anthony Athanas, probably in a new building that is part of a \$400 million mixed-use complex on the pier.

And the Doulos family, which ran Jimmy's for three generations until its closing earlier this year, has a deal with Cresset Development LLC of Boston to open a new Jimmy's in a modern two-story building in the old location, said Kim Doulos, granddaughter of the founder. The Doulos family has an agreement with McCormick & Schmick's Seafood Restaurants to manage Jimmy's jointly, she said. The new building also would have room for additional restaurants.

"We are absolutely 100 percent coming back," she said. The familiar "neon sign is in storage as we speak."

People who work in the neighborhood say they're starved for good eating alternatives. Sandra Shapiro, a partner at law firm Foley Hoag LLP in the World Trade Center West building, said new restaurants cannot come soon enough.

THE BOSTON GLOBE

Founded 1872

RICHARD H. GILMAN, *Publisher*

MARTIN BARON, *Editor*

HELEN W. DONOVAN, *Executive Editor*

RICHARD J. DANIELS, *President and General Manager*

October 15, 2006

New destination dining: South Boston Seaport

By Alison Arnett and Thomas C. Palmer Jr.

GLOBE STAFF

She's hoping that empty spaces in her building and an adjoining one are soon filled with locally owned restaurants. "I really don't want another offshoot of a national chain," she said.

Some restaurant entrepreneurs are debating whether they should be among the first in an area with few diners right now - or wait for competitors to settle the district and risk paying higher rents.

Berkowitz, for example, said his company made the right move in being among the first new restaurants to settle in the neighborhood, and said Legal Test Kitchen has surpassed Legal's expectations.

"If I waited a year and a half, we wouldn't have been able to strike the same deal" on the lease with Fallon, he said.

Others said there is no need to rush, as it probably will take years for there to be enough people to live or work in the area to support many restaurants.

"Everybody's worried it's still two years out before the young professionals move in," said Charles M. Perkins, whose Boston Restaurant Group brokers restaurant space.

Joe Sciolla, managing principal at the brokerage Cresa Partners Boston Inc., also is skeptical. He thinks it might be five to seven years before a new office tower is built in the area, a needed magnet. "I don't think residential is going to be the key driver for more restaurants," he said. "I think you need to have that consistent workforce."

Rents for restaurants are about \$35 a square foot-- half of what restaurants would pay in Back Bay, Boston's premier dining area -- but are expected to rise as the area gets built out.

THE BOSTON GLOBE

Founded 1872

RICHARD H. GILMAN, *Publisher*

MARTIN BARON, *Editor*

HELEN W. DONOVAN, *Executive Editor*

RICHARD J. DANIELS, *President and General Manager*

October 15, 2006

New destination dining: South Boston Seaport

By Alison Arnett and Thomas C. Palmer Jr.

GLOBE STAFF

And as they do, the higher rents may to some degree determine the type of restaurants that can afford to locate in the Seaport and Fort Point Channel areas. National chains or well-financed local chefs with a record of drawing crowds, will be likelier to afford high rents than smaller, more intimate restaurants or startups by chefs who have yet to make a name for themselves.

Fallon, who also developed the 465-unit Park Lane, discovered through surveys that people in the neighborhood lamented the loss of several modestly priced restaurants like Jimbo's Fish Shanty. Fallon said the restaurants going into his development, including

Legal Test Kitchen, where the entrees range from \$13 to about \$20, and Salvatore's are reasonably priced.

As more restaurants sign on to a waterfront future, there may be fewer bargains in menu prices and lease rates. Berkowitz recently paid the Doulos family more than \$200,000 for the liquor license for his upcoming Legal C. But being on the water may outrank any other concerns, he said.

“Anything right on the water can't help but be expensive,” Berkowitz said.