

2 college buddies are carrying on a family legacy with a new Fairfield restaurant



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By Eric Schwartzberg, Staff Writer

A new Fairfield restaurant working toward a late May opening is taking the place of a well-known eatery that operated in the city for decades.

Caruso's Ristorante & Bar is set to debut by month's end at 6765 Dixie Highway in the building formerly occupied by the Spinning Fork.

That restaurant was founded by Rakan Shteivi, who died in 2016 and bequeathed ownership of the Spinning Fork franchise to his family. The Caruso's moniker pays tribute to Shteivi, who previously operated a Cincinnati restaurant by the same name.

Shteivi's son, Braheam, along with college friend Mike Sage, are working to transform the interior of the restaurant, renovating the existing 2,500-square-foot dining room and creating a private dining area for small and large parties of up to 30 people, as well as business meetings that require full privacy.

Braheam Shteivi and Sage also have updated the restaurant's exterior with a new paint job and new landscaping.

“This is a passion project for me and Mike,” Shteivi said. “We’d been talking about doing a project for a while and doing an homage to my dad on his old restaurant I think would be a good thing. Caruso’s was where most of the Spinning Fork’s recipes were founded — the sauce, the house dressing that everybody loves, that was all Caruso’s stuff.”

The menu at the soon-to-open Caruso’s Ristorante & Bar will include traditional Italian, American-Italian and dishes the two friends and business partners have put their personal spin on. That includes wood-fired pizzas and handmade pastas for dinner, and a focus on pizzas and sandwiches for lunch, Sage said.

“Our menu is inspired by our travels through Italy,” he said. “We’ve taken time to source the finest ingredients, working with local purveyors where possible. Our pizza and pasta dough are made fresh by hand.”

Caruso’s Ristorante & Bar will have a wine list of approximately 75 bottles, which will concentrate on Italian selections but also feature recognizable American brands and varietals, as well as “clean” wines, Sage said.

It will feature a lineup of seven rotating taps from Brink Brewery, the winner of the Best Very Small Brewery Award at the Great American Beer Festival, along with domestic and Italian beers.

The restaurant also plans to feature an “aggressively priced, wine-focused” happy hour. Shteivi and Sage have lived the restaurateur life before becoming business partners.

Shteivi, who grew up in the restaurant industry, most recently has been acting as a traveling chef at Jeff Ruby’s. He created MIA in Oxford, specializing in fine dining and offering an upscale night club. He’s also owned or operated four Gold Star Chili restaurants, The Silver Tee formerly at the Elks Country Club, a diner in Middletown and a sports bar in Mason.

Sage, who joined the restaurant group three years ago, operated MIA, The Silver Tee and Bourbon's Kitchen and provide business operational oversight to the other restaurants, but do not have a hand in the daily operations.

The new restaurant will employ approximately 30 people.