

News Around the 'Burgh'

BY JEFF VAVRO

Adding a Portuguese Flavor

Claudio Pereira was born in New York City, but spent most of his life in Portugal. Since he was 16 years old, he worked in many restaurants and bars in the country. He also had the right roots for the industry. His father, Antonio, already had established himself as a popular restaurateur in the states.

Since 1991, Antonio Pereira has operated the successful Myorca Spanish restaurant in the South Side. (A companion restaurant next door, Ibiza Wine and Tapas Bar, opened soon after.) When Claudio came to live in Pittsburgh in 2002, he worked for a while with his dad, but soon got bitten by his own restaurant bug. Now 28, he is following in his father's footsteps with the opening of Marisqueira restaurant.

With the help of Specialty Group, which brokered the sale, Claudio and his partner Francisco Buxareo are bringing a Portuguese flavor to Aspin Wall. The name of the restaurant, which features a dining area for 80, a full bar and wine menu, loosely translates to "seafood house," says Claudio.

He says the menu will not highlight a traditional "Portuguese dish," and laughs when pointing out that many people would not like some of the ingredients in such a dish, "Tripe (cattle's stomach lining), beef tongue and pig's nose are actually traditional dishes." Instead, Marisqueira will feature many of the mainstay ingredients of Portuguese cooking such as a olive oil, garlic and cumin.

Buxareo also has his own long history in the industry, including working for almost 20 years with Antonio Pereira at Myorca. The chef of the new place also is an employee of Myorca.

Gay Bars Thrive in City

According to national trends, gay bars and nightclubs slowly are becoming a thing of the past. In Pittsburgh, however, that trend isn't so obvious. The city still has about a dozen. In fact, a national gay publication recently ranked the city the fifth most gay-friendly city in the United States, putting us even higher on the list than San Francisco.

The majority of the bars in the city usually offer their patrons the usual bar amenities: drink specials, music, pool, etc. Only one offers a dance floor, and the city's most-prominent gay club, Pegasus, closed its downtown location a few years ago and moved out further into the North Side area. That left the city with a void of dance club-like alternatives for gays.

Last month, that niche got filled by not one but two places that opened literally within blocks of each other. Headquarters Night Club, on Smallman Street in the Strip District, is a two-floor 5,000-sq-ft. club that its owner opened after realizing the void in the city. Bob Hagerman, 48, ran a gay club in Hagerstown, Maryland, from 1992 to 2000. When he moved up here in 2006, he said he discovered there weren't many places to dance. "I asked friends to take me out to the hot dance spots. I didn't really find anything," he said.

Just a few blocks down on Smallman, Cruze Bar is going after the same crowd. The one-level club (the former Whiskey Dicks bar) offers much of the same: a state-of-the-art dance floor, sound system and two bars. Owners of Cruze could not be reached for comment.

Ads for Cruze tout it as "LGBT & Hetero-Friendly," another new trend

in gay clubs that acknowledges that many heterosexual people now come to gay bars. Hagerman says Headquarters is open to everyone, but he expects more of a gay crowd.

He also is not concerned about the national trends, and thinks that Pittsburgh has enough of a gay population to fill this niche. "I think we (Headquarters and Cruze) can be good bookends for the Strip District," says Hagerman.

Civic Arena Fight Continues

You just can't keep the Civic Arena down or, in this case, knock it down. A group pushing to keep the former Civic Arena from being hit with the wrecking ball fired its latest shot after City Council rejected a proposal to grant the arena a historic designation. Such a designation would have ensured the the 49-year-old former home of the Penguins stayed in tact.

Preservation Pittsburgh filed a suit against various officials claiming the Civic Arena already received such a designation from the Pittsburgh Historic and Museum Commission. Knocking it down, the suit says, would put the city in violation of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Proponents argue the domed structure is a unique architecture landmark and should be preserved; opponents say the arena has long fulfilled its need and the space needs to be renovated for future use by housing or even new business.

Tips or column news: Send them to Jeff Vavro at jvavro@comcast.net.