

## Former Mighty Oak Barrel owner to take over McCandless restaurant

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By Melissa McCart / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The former co-owner of the Mighty Oak Barrel in Oakmont, Grainne Trainor, has bought Blue Dining in McCandless.

Her plan is to transition the restaurant and martini bar, at 1701 Duncan Ave., into a contemporary American restaurant with a focus on wine.

The restaurant will remain open through the transition, which will be in-progress through early spring, when the sale of the liquor license is expected to be completed by the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board.

Terri Sokoloff, of Specialty Group, handled the sale. She had also sold Ms. Trainor the Oakmont restaurant in the late 1990s.

Compared to the quite small Mighty Oak Barrel, “Blue’s platform allows her to take advantage of a larger bar, a bigger dining area and will allow her to introduce her renowned wine program,” Ms. Sokoloff said. “Her track record speaks for itself, especially where we see many places last only a couple years.”

Ms. Trainor fashioned the Mighty Oak Barrel into a well-regarded restaurant from July 1998 through November 2013. It has since been under new management.

After she left, the North Hills resident saw a gap in the market closer to home.

“The North Hills needs a great neighborhood restaurant,” she said. “I want to build a great wine list and want to make wine fun.”

Ms. Trainor comes to the Allison Park area by way of Northern Ireland. She said her answer to the

question, "What do you want to do when you grow up?" was often, "I want to move to America."

After she graduated from college in Belfast, her wish came true. She visited her mother's sisters who had settled in the New York and New Jersey areas and eventually made her way to Pittsburgh, where she settled.

But it was in Ireland that she cultivated her love for the work.

"In Ireland, my family owned the neighborhood bar in our small town," she said. "So I was literally raised in it."

As her siblings grew up and moved out, she took on more responsibilities and grew to love the work.

"It's always been very comforting," she said. "Restaurant work can be a feel good business."

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