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# Molinaro bringing two Il Pizzaiolo restaurants to the North Hills

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[Ron Molinaro](#) is moving forward to bring his Mt. Lebanon mainstay Il Pizzaiolo to two new locations in the North Hills.

Look for Il Pizzaiolo to soon take over the space in which the restaurant Tamari is set to close in Warrendale Village. It is estimated to reopen as the popular Italian restaurant in October. At the same time, Burchick Construction is preparing to begin building the first ground-up Il Pizzaiolo in a farmhouse-style structure on Harts Run Road in Hampton Township, a restaurant set to open either by the end of the year or in early 2016.

It's an aggressive expansion period for Molinaro, who is also leading a group to open a new Caribbean restaurant called Pirata in the new Tower 260 just off Market Square downtown as he continues to work through the details of a deal to establish his [first Pizzuvio, a pared-down concept, in a new apartment building currently under construction in East Liberty](#).

As to his approach to the two new locations of Il Pizzaiolo, Molinaro said, "It's going to be very much like what we do in Mount Lebanon."

He added the larger 4,500-square-foot restaurant in Warrendale may feature a little more seafood and feature a decor that will "be very southern Italian inspired."

Downtown-based Fukui Architects will design the buildout for the new Il Pizzaiolo, Molinaro said. Molinaro had considered the former Siba Cucina in Seven Fields, Butler County, as a location but could not reach an agreement with his investor group at the time. The Siba space has since been taken as a new restaurant by former Steelers great [Hines Ward](#).

Molinaro said he believes the Warrendale location will be a better spot for one of his new eatery

locations.

"This one is basically in between two super highways," he said of the shopping center's location between Route 19 and Interstate 79. "The accessibility is tremendous."

Molinaro is pushing forward with a new investor group after cutting ties with a group with which he opened the Il Pizzaiolo in Market Square, in which he is no longer involved.

Bob Wolfinger, a partner in the new investor group, said he expects the two North Hills locations to reach diners in different communities in the North Hills, with the Hampton restaurant close to Allison Park and within reach to residents of Fox Chapel, while the Warrendale restaurant will pull from northern communities, such as Cranberry and Wexford.

He expects the Il Pizzaiolo brand to travel well after the original restaurant established a strong following and great reputation in its 19 years in Mount Lebanon.

"Il Pizzaiolo name is strong in Pittsburgh," he said. "It's not like bringing in a new concept in which we have to prove ourselves."

For his part, Molinaro expects pursuing two Il Pizzaiolo restaurants at once will bring some economies of scale.

"I actually feel that doing the two Il Pizzaiolos basically at the same time is not double the work. There's a lot of efficiency in that," he said. "The challenge will be hiring 80 to 100 employees, versus 40 to 50. Finding that many good people at once will be difficult."

To be sure, Molinaro expects to build out Il Pizzaiolo as a local artisan restaurant while still planning to pursue Pizzuvio as a pared-down restaurant for broader expansion. He acknowledged delaying a plan to open a first location for Pizzuvio in Akron, Ohio, to focus on the two new North Hills operations.

Terri Sokoloff, principal of Ross-based restaurant services firm Specialty Group, expects the new restaurants will succeed because of his track record.

"They've had such a great reputation in the South Hills," she said of Il Pizzaiolo, adding of Molinaro: "He'll do fine because he's proven."

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