
From the Pittsburgh Business Times:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/pittsburgh/news/2021/08/09/nook-to-replace-coca-cafe-on-butler-street.html>

Lawrenceville operator working to bring new breakfast restaurant to former Coca Cafe space on Butler Street

Aug 9, 2021, 12:14pm EDT

After five years of building up a clientele for his Geppetto Cafe, along with generating stays for his Airbnb apartments, Evren Karabacak is poised to bring a new breakfast restaurant to the former site of Coca Cafe, a Lawrenceville landmark that helped to spur the neighborhood's revitalization and ended a nearly 18-year run when its owners put it up for sale last year in the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Coca Cafe did not close because of a failure," said Karabacak, noting the challenges all restaurants have faced amid the pandemic. "They had a solid business."

He's convinced enough of the potential that he has bought the business, which recently was approved for a liquor license, and is



TIM SCHOOLEY

The former Coca Cafe in the 6th ward of Butler Street in Lawrenceville. A new operator is preparing to bring a new breakfast and lunch restaurant to the location.

serving breakfast, lunch and brunch out of the familiar facade and its large windows.

Karabacak, a native of Turkey who came to Pittsburgh to attend college at Point Park University, has the confidence to move forward with his second restaurant after his Geppetto Cafe has largely thrived through all the challenges of the pandemic.

That included making all the necessary adjustments to meet Covid protocols, establishing a new app to better facilitate take-out and delivery orders, and building out a rear patio.

He hedges on offering any kind of a time frame for an opening yet since he's engaged in what is now an industrywide challenge of recruiting the employees he needs to staff the restaurant while designing a menu for it that remains a work in progress.

Business has continued to gradually grow at Geppetto, said Karabacak, who is able to fill apartments above Geppetto with Airbnb guests who then dine at the restaurant.

"Our wait list is crazy now. People are coming nonstop," he said, noting an approach that has "worked very well."

Sidney Sokoloff, a principal at Ross-based Specialty Group, who represented the restaurant, sees the plan filling a need for restaurants that serve brunch in the neighborhood, expecting the liquor license will enable a broader offering.

He expects Nook will be a good fit for the former Coca Cafe space and a natural outgrowth for Geppetto Cafe.

"It can only grow what he's already started. It's a good expansion for the community," he said. "Whatever he decides to do, it will only grow that brunch scene."

Tim Schooley

Reporter

Pittsburgh Business Times

