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## **Geppetto Cafe operator to take over Azorean Cafe space in Bloomfield**

*Mar 31, 2023, 4:44pm EDT*



Tim Schooley

The former Azorean Cafe at 4715 Liberty Ave. The Bloomfield restaurant has been bought by the owner of Geppetto Cafe in Lawrenceville who plans to bring a new version of the restaurant to the Liberty Avenue space.

After a few months on the market, a buyer has surfaced for the Azorean Cafe in Bloomfield.

And it's a familiar presence from just down the hill on Butler Street in Lawrenceville.

The ownership of the Azorean Cafe, which closed recently after a five-year run specializing in Portuguese cuisine, announced on its Facebook page that the Geppetto Cafe in Lawrenceville was poised to take over the location:



Thank you to the Bloomfield community and all of our customers for a great 5 years! The Azorean cafe team is starting a new chapter that we are really excited about. Please give a warm welcome to @geppetto cafe in the community now! We also want to thank @specialtygroup pgh @therestaurantbroker pgh for helping us through the process. Obrigada!

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Terri and Sidney Sokoloff of Specialty Group confirmed the basics of the deal after representing the Azorean Cafe business for sale.

The expansion will mark the third restaurant for owner Evren Karabacak, who built up a consistent clientele for his Geppetto Cafe in the ninth ward of Butler Street and then bought the former Coca Cafe in the six ward of Butler Street and replaced it with The Nook, a similarly positioned breakfast, lunch and brunch place, nearly two years ago.

The prospect of the Geppetto Cafe operator expanding with a new location in Bloomfield marks the latest iteration of a new generation of restaurant talent setting up in a neighborhood long known as Pittsburgh's Little Italy but changing dramatically now with restaurants of varied cuisines, suggested Terri Sokoloff.

"It's like a melting pot of extraordinary talent," said Sokoloff of Bloomfield at the moment.

Geppetto Cafe expanding into the neighborhood comes after other newcomers in recent months and years, most recently highlighted by the owners and chefs of the vegan restaurant Apteka on Liberty Avenue advancing to the finals of the James Beard awards.

That includes Grain Trainor opening her G's on Liberty a few years ago where Alexander's Italian Bistro had operated for decades; Juan Grimaldo, owner of the well-regarded Totopo Mexican Kitchen and Bar in Mount Lebanon buying the former Del's for a new restaurant soon to come; and, most recently, the pop-up dining phenomenon Fet-Fisk inking a deal to open a restaurant in the former Lombardozi's.

Sokoloff expects the space in the former Azorean Cafe to be a straight-forward adjustment for Karabacak.

"For Evren, it's an easy scenario," she said. "He can put his imprint on it."

Sidney Sokoloff, who sold Coca Cafe to Karabacak, said he's succeeded with The Nook to the point where the expansion into the Azorean space "made sense as a next step."

He emphasized that the exact approach for the new restaurant is still to be fully hashed out but to expect a "reimagined version of Geppetto Cafe."

It was a deal that partially came together as Karabacak visited family in his native Turkey, a country working to recover from a devastating earthquake, making him immediately

unavailable for comment.

Yet the deal came together and closed at the end of March.

"He has a great product," Sokoloff said of Karabacak. "He works very hard ... and he's done a great job with it."



**Tim Schooley**  
Reporter - *Pittsburgh Business Times*

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