

Catch 41 lands Jimmy's Bait-N-Tackle Pubgrille



Jimmy's Bait-N-Tackle Pubgrille is the one that got away this year.

Launched June 1 at the start of Naples' slow season, Jimmy's lasted only five months before the restaurant at the Ramada Inn was sold again. As of Nov. 1, Jimmy's is under new ownership and it won't be Jimmy's for long.

Next month, the bar and grill will be renamed Catch 41.

"It's still Jimmy's as far as signage. We probably will shut down for a couple of days at the end of November and reopen the first week of December (as Catch 41)," said Lawrence Merlino, one of the new co-owners of the local restaurant. "We are doing a new concept. It's going to be like a gastropub – high-quality bar food at a great cost."

Jimmy McDonnell, who started his short-lived venture with an abundance of enthusiasm, is working to strike another deal in his native Naples. He wants to launch a local store for selling reclaimed, high-end building materials and fixtures.

"I'm a dealmaker," he said matter of factly.

In his last public post on Facebook earlier this month representing Jimmy's Bait-N-Tackle, McDonnell said the entire process has been the most blessed, cursed, rewarding and tragic experience of his life.

“Downtrodden I am not. I am grateful. We are grateful. It is in gratitude that we find the lessons. So many of you have touched our lives over these several months and with that, hope sprang eternal. I have grown fond of hearing all of you commonly refer to our eatery as ‘The Shop.’ This venture was not and is not about monetary gain. The venture is about connections and creating a place to stay ‘warm’ and to feel truly a part of. I believe we have succeeded. It was you, each of you that made it happen,” the social media message reads in part.

“The Shop” was sold to a wonderful, Italian family that recently relocated here from New Jersey, McDonnell said.

“I believe their hearts felt what ours did and will strive to bring our efforts even higher,” he said.

A mutual friend brought both parties together and the sale of the business was sealed last week.

“I was looking to relocate from New Jersey, so it worked out. So here we are,” said Merlino, who will co-own Catch 41 with cousins by marriage, sisters Heather and Samantha Leek, who also recently relocated from New Jersey.

Joining them is Chef Anthony Esposito, who most recently worked under celebrity Chef Michael Psilakis at Teatro in the new Southwest Florida Performing Arts Center in Bonita Springs. The former corporate chef for P.F. Chang’s China Bistro also was an executive chef at Pizzaro's Ristorante & Pizzeria in Bonita.

Esposito plans to create a seafood gastropub with an Italian flair and a menu label “From Under the Reef by Chef Anthony.”

“It’s going to remain a sports bar. We’re just going to bring upscale food to it,” he said, noting that the food will be mostly locally sourced.

While the restaurant will continue serving Jimmy’s food selections for now, the menu will change later this month.

Although the interior will be revamped some to create more of an ocean or marine theme with aqua and teal, the local color of Jimmy’s numerous framed pictures will remain, Merlino said.

“I like the theme he has going on,” he said.

The nearly 200-seat restaurant will open for lunch at 11 a.m. and extend dining options through a late-night bar menu.

Before Jimmy’s, the restaurant at 1100 U.S. 41 N. most recently was Pompano Bar & Grill, which closed at the end of April after operating two years. Pate’s Steakhouse & Pub previously operated there for eight years, and the space also had been Beau's Paradise Grill, Bobby Rubino's Ribs and other eateries when the hotel used to be Holiday Inn.