

## Public House restaurant now public in North Naples



Public House has gone public.

The new corner bar and restaurant, which completes the picture at Creekside Corners, opened for dinner service Monday and lunch Tuesday on the southeast corner of Goodlette-Frank and Immokalee roads in North Naples. Public House anchors the retail center that launched last May with the opening of McAlister's Deli on its eastern end.

The fact that Public House serves lunch and dinner and is a bit more casual sets it apart from HobNob Kitchen + Bar and Midtown Kitchen + Bar, the other two Naples destinations created and operated by Michael Hernandez, a longtime local restaurateur.

"Up here we're really looking to hit with the public," said Tony Biagetti, the executive chef overseeing all three restaurants. "Of course we want the tourists to come in, but we want it to be a local place. We want people here in the summer to be able to enjoy the bands, the food and so on."



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**The bacon and eggs appetizer at Public House features deviled eggs with tomato jam and candied bacon. (Photo: Tim Aten/Naples Daily News)**

The only two menu items carried over from Midtown and HobNob are the octopus and white beans small plate and the deviled eggs with tomato jam and candied bacon appetizer. Both, by the way, are among at least a dozen gluten-free options on the menu.

“Everything else is new, fresh and created just specifically for this restaurant. We make everything fresh here,” said Biagetti, who first hooked up with Hernandez years ago while he was executive chef at the former Handsome Harry’s Third Street Bistro when Hernandez assumed ownership of the downtown venue.



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**Owner Michael Hernandez at his new Public House restaurant and lounge that anchors Creekside Corners on the southeast corner of Goodlette-Frank and Immokalee roads in North Naples. (Photo: Tim Aten/Naples Daily News)**

“Mike’s probably one of the best people I’ve ever worked for, and I’ve worked for a lot of them,” he said. “I ran 1,500-seat catering facilities before I came down here (in 1991). I did 500-seat restaurants, so to come in here and for him to give me the creativity that I want to do, it’s nice.”

The menu created for Public House is concise and clean and undoubtedly creative. Menu sections have about eight to 11 items each, featuring labels such as “Bites & Share” (\$7 to \$14), “Little Plates” (\$12 to \$15), “Large Plates” (\$16 to \$28 for dinner) and for lunch, “Between the Bun and More” (\$12 to \$16). Soups, salads and sides round out the mix.





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**Blackened mahi tostadas with roasted tomato and avocado salsa and jalapeño lime crema at Public House. (Photo: Tim Aten/Naples Daily News)**

"I call it eclectic, which just means there's a variety. There's a little bit of everything," Biagetti said. "So you're going to get calamari with kung pao sauce and hot peppers instead of marinara. You're going to get crispy pork belly tacos with a cilantro-scented slaw and a lime crema. You've got ginger soy here. You've got barbecue here. You've got French and your duck confit. You've got Amatriciana sauce on your pasta. So it's eclectic. It's a little bit of everything all going on. Those are the things, so you really need to pick your favorite."



**A Caprese flatbread at Public House.** *(Photo: Zoe Hernandez/Public House)*

Of course, it's difficult for Biagetti to pick his favorite on the menu, which was a team effort that culled 40 items from at least 120 tested and tasted.

"Personally, I'm very proud of the duck confit and our beef brisket because those are the things that we create," he said. "You're not just putting a piece of steak on the grill. You're taking time."



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**Barbecue beef brisket with vegetable slaw and garlic Parmesan fries at Public House.** *(Photo: Tim Aten/Naples Daily News)*

Hernandez has some difficulty singling out his Public House favorites, too.

“Really they’re all good. The fish — the salmon and the mahi — is really good. The short ribs are great,” he said. “We’ve definitely done some new items that we hadn’t done before.”

The restaurant’s creative American cuisine influences the overall eclectic feel of the new space, too.

“We always try to put a different twist on it through the menu and also with a little bit of the design. We try to keep it fairly new. We don’t try to cookie-cut anything,” Hernandez said.



**An Italian panini on the lunch menu at Public House.** *(Photo: Zoe Hernandez/Public House)*

Public House makes use of reclaimed wood, including shiplap accented with a rainbow wash of muted colors. A wall in the lounge area is papered with mostly classic rock posters, providing a conversation piece above a banquette upholstered with denim patchwork. Features such as recycled burlap coffee bags used as shades for some of the lights, a variety of modern industrial lighting and wood floors result in a warm, contemporary look and casual ambiance.

“We try to buy the best products available and then try to work from there,” Hernandez said.





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**Owner Michael Hernandez, left, chats with guests at his new Public House restaurant and lounge that anchors Creekside Corners on the southeast corner of Goodlette-Frank and Immokalee roads in North Naples. (Photo: Tim Aten/Naples Daily News)**

Because Midtown preceded Public House by just eight months, it's the first time Hernandez and company have designed two restaurants in such a short time. It's also the first lunch menu the team has attempted in many years. With lunch, of course, the goal is not only serve good food, but do so quickly so that folks can eat and get back to work in a relatively short period of time.

The lunch menu includes flatbreads, burgers, sandwiches and panini, as well as soups, salads and appetizers. Desserts feature house-made ice cream and sorbets, a S'mores crème brulee, doughnuts, salted caramels, a chocolate chip cookie bake and B52 cake with three layers of chocolate ganache, raspberry sauce and "lots of booze."





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**B52 Cake with three layers of chocolate ganache, raspberry sauce and “lots of booze” at Public House.** *(Photo: Tim Aten/Naples Daily News)*

Through a cooperative relationship with the new Bone Hook Brewing Co. next door, Public House plans to offer brewhouse patrons six to eight small plates and bites that can be ordered and fairly quickly delivered. “We’ll kind of experiment from there,” Hernandez said.

On the flip side, Public House also will rotate one of Bone Hook’s craft beers into its regular offerings on tap, supplementing its selections of craft beers and cocktails. The 6,750-square-foot restaurant has about 220 seats inside and about 50 outside on a covered patio.



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**Two creative cocktails at the new Public House on the corner of Goodlette-Frank and Immokalee roads in North Naples. (Photo: Tim Aten/Naples Daily News)**

Public House, 1514 Immokalee Road, is open 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sundays through Thursdays and 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays. For more information call 239-232-2551 or go to [publichouseofnaples.com](http://publichouseofnaples.com).