

Summer casualties for local restaurants



Although the summer was hot for local restaurant openings, we also had a few casualties post-season.

You already know about some of the local venues that closed in June such as Fred's Food, Fun & Spirits in North Naples, Andy's Susie's Too and AJ's Ice Cream in East Naples, and O'Donoghue's Bar and Grill on Marco Island. In July, we reported the loss of Florida Kitchen in Miromar Outlets, Cider Press Café in North Naples and the original location of Inca's Kitchen in Golden Gate. This month, longtime Stoney's Steakhouse closed ahead of this fall's launch of St. Germain Steakhouse in Bayfront.

Here are some more recent closings and others that you may not know about yet.

La Bamba Naples

The most recent local restaurant to close was the longtime La Bamba Mexican Restaurant in North Naples.

La Bamba closed Aug. 22 after operating restaurants for nearly 25 years in Collier County. La Bamba started in Naples in 1993 when Chef Giuseppe Rinaldi opened his first restaurant adjacent to Oakes Farm Market on Davis Boulevard. That longtime location eventually was relocated nearby to Airport-Pulling Road, but closed three years ago.

After growing La Bamba from East Naples to Bed Bath & Beyond Plaza in North Naples, the Rinaldis moved their restaurant across the street to the larger space of the former China Tokyo when the longtime Chinese restaurant closed five years ago.

Turns out the nearly 3,600 square feet was too much space.

“We thought that was too big of a footprint,” said son Rodrigo Rinaldi.

The La Bamba location at Miromar Outlets in Estero will remain open and operated by the Rinaldi family, especially Guiseppe’s sons Mariano and Rodrigo. They hope to eventually reopen La Bamba in a smaller location in the Naples area.

Meanwhile, La Bamba's vacated space in Pine Ridge Crossing on the southwest corner of Airport-Pulling and Pine Ridge roads will be the new Henning’s Chicago Kitchen this fall.

“We've applied for permits and hope to be open sometime in October,” said Scott Henning, co-owner and chef of Henning’s.

After operating for a year and a half in the Naples Outlet Center off Collier Boulevard, the popular pizzeria closed at the end of April in anticipation of a move 13 miles north. The Chicago-influenced pizzeria will more than double its seating and plans a full bar, including a Bloody Mary bar, to complement its previous beer and wine selections.

Although Henning had more time off than he had anticipated, he made the best of it.

“The benefit to this time has been me reconnecting with friends, family and, most importantly, my wife and kids,” he said.

Henning also has been cooking up a new signature brisket and short rib burger blend with a house-cured bacon and caramelized onions on a beer mash bun.

“We've been diligently working on creating the best burger blend in the area using brisket and short rib, an amazing vegan burger with vegan fry sauce, and a buttery brioche bun made in house,” Henning said. “We aren't adding much to the menu but what we do, it's going to be special. Pizza is still the heart and soul of what Henning's does, but we wanted to do something wow with the added space.”

Henning's will move into the unit near Beall’s in the shopping center anchored by Super Target and Publix. The handoff of the restaurant space from La Bamba to Henning’s came about because Rodrigo Rinaldi and Scott Henning were high school friends and soccer teammates in the early '90s at St. John Neumann in Naples.

When Rinaldi found out Henning was looking to grow his Chicago Kitchen in a more centralized space in Naples, he told his longtime friend that he may have just the spot for him.



The closing of Konrad's Tropical Grille in early August is especially notable because chef-owner Konrad Meyerhofer has been serving Marco Island for 35 years. This portrait of him was taken at Konrad's in October 2014. (Photo: John M. Wiscocki)

Konrad's

The closing of Konrad's Tropical Grille in early August is especially notable because chef-owner Konrad Meyerhofer has been serving Marco Island for 35 years.

Is it the end of an era? Meyerhofer, 65, was unavailable for comment, but his culinary absence on the island will be noticed.

The longtime restaurateur was executive chef at the Essex Hotel in Manhattan when he relocated in 1981 to be a top chef at the Marco Marriott. By the mid-'80s, he opened his own place – the Bavarian Inn – a local watering hole on Winterberry Drive. For more than 20 years, he operated Konrad's in Marco Walk until he lost his lease there in 2012.

After a year off, Meyerhofer opened his new Konrad's in the former space of Bimini's Beach Club, Almost Famous Mel's and Toucan's Bar & Grill on South Collier Boulevard. But now it has closed without word on the future of the space or Meyerhofer.

Konrad's served seafood, steaks and Bavarian specialties, and even had a menu section with "A Little Bit of Bavaria on a Tropical Island." This German fare included jaeger schnitzel, wienerschnitzel, sauerbraten, spätzle, bratwurst and potato pancakes.



Erika's Cafe served countless meals during its nearly 17-year run in Green Tree Center on the southwest corner of Airport-Pulling and Immokalee roads in North Naples. (Photo: Tim Aten/Naples Daily News)

Erika's Cafe

Erika's Cafe served countless meals during its nearly 17-year run in Green Tree Center on the southwest corner of Airport-Pulling and Immokalee roads in North Naples.

Chef/owner Jose Callejas provided personal service to longtime patrons and even sometimes serenaded them in song with his acoustic guitar. The cafe launched at the end of 1999 and permanently closed at the end of May because of a family matter, but details were not available.

"It was a popular spot for a long time," said Jack Crifasi, the owner and operator of the shopping center.

Another restaurant is expected to open in that location, said Crifasi, who is in negotiation with a new tenant.



At the end of last season, Chef David Weinberg closed Kitchen 845 in The Pavilion shopping center and relocated his catering business to a commercial kitchen off Rail Head Boulevard in North Naples. (Photo: Naples Daily News)

Kitchen 845

After operating his Kitchen 845 restaurant for more than a decade, Chef David Weinberg is concentrating strictly on catering now.

At the end of last season, Weinberg closed Kitchen 845 in The Pavilion shopping center and relocated his catering business to a commercial kitchen off Rail Head Boulevard in North Naples.

"I now have a kitchen where I do customized catering for both home as well as businesses," he said. "I also have weekly meal plans and daily lunch specials which can be picked up."

Weinberg started his business in 2004 with the concept of filling a community need in this area for handcrafted, non-corporate food such as entrees to go, catering and specialty soups and sandwiches.

"I still love what I do," he said. "I am still around – just in another venue that is not open to the public."

For catering orders, email Weinberg at 845kitchen@gmail.com or call him at 239-692-2440.

[Brooks Gourmet Burgers & Dogs](#) will open a second location this fall in The Pavilion space vacated by Kitchen 845 at 845 Vanderbilt Beach Road.



After nine years at Coconut Point in Estero, Bice Grand Café closed June 30. (Photo: The News-Press)

Bice Grand Cafe

After nine years at Coconut Point in Estero, Bice Grand Cafe closed June 30.

The original location, Bice Ristorante, remains open at 300 Fifth Ave. S., the corner of Fifth and Third Street South in downtown Naples.

A farewell note was posted June 30 on the Facebook page for the upscale Italian restaurant:

"Today we will close our doors. Thank you very much to everyone for your continued patronage and support throughout this years. We are proud of what we did at Bice Grand Cafe and we express our deep gratitude to all of our talented cooks, bartenders, waiters, hosts, bussers and dishwashers that have become a part of our family. From the bottom of our hearts — thank you. Farewell Estero."



Royale Cafe Vinoteca closed in July at 180 U.S. 41 S.in Naples. (Photo: Tim Aten/Naples Daily News)

Royale Cafe Vinoteca

Royale Cafe Vinoteca closed in July, but we may not have seen the last of the local eatery along U.S. 41 in the heart of Naples.

The business is for sale, so a new owner could reopen the café there, said Ingrid Florez, who in late 2012 first opened the European-American fusion bistro and wine bar at 180 U.S. 41 S.

"I'm looking into that," Florez said. "There are a couple of people looking at it."

For a short time, another owner most recently operated the local eatery on the corner of the Contessa building, which Florez owns and designed herself.



American Classic Diner, under new management since the end of May, became Forty-One Diner in June and started opening 24 hours daily in August. (Photo: Naples Daily News)

Diner do-over

American Classic Diner, under new management since the end of May, became Forty-One Diner in June and started operating 24 hours daily in August.

The classic silver diner on U.S. 41 in San Carlos Park hosted Mel's Diner for years, and since has been Arbon's Diner, Silver Diner and Talk of the Town. American Classic Diner launched in October 2014 in that freestanding building at Grand Bay Plaza, 19050 U.S. 41 S., just north of Sanibel Boulevard.

Arby's

The longtime Arby's in Naples is only temporarily closed as it undergoes an extreme makeover.

The fast-food restaurant, best known for its roast beef sandwiches, is getting a complete overhaul after operating for two decades in Pine Ridge Crossing shopping center on the southwest corner of Pine Ridge and Airport-Pulling roads. Built in 1995, the 3,000-square-foot store will see interior and exterior façade changes, including mechanical, electrical and plumbing upgrades, roofing, windows, and the asphalt in the drive-thru lane is being replaced with concrete, the building permit shows.

Arby's also received permits to install two new wall signs and to refurbish the existing monument sign with new faces and logo.

While the location at 2436 Pine Ridge Road is temporarily out of commission, the nearest Arby's franchise is at 9975 Corkscrew Road in Estero.