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## New soul food spots coming to Tenderloin, Bayview

Amanda Berne  
 Wednesday, February 1, 2006

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Turning around a jinxed location takes some gumption, but it doesn't keep restaurateurs from trying.

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Mason St. (at Market Street) in San Francisco did so hoping it would become a destination. Even the highly regarded Belon, with Paul Arenstam at the stoves, couldn't make a go of it in what is generally regarded as a less-than-desirable neighborhood.

Perhaps this situation will change on March 1 when Jay Foster takes soul food downtown and upscale with Farmer Brown, which will offer three meals daily, catering to the lunch crowd during the day, and the neighborhood's emerging art scene at night.

Is three the magic number? Farmer Brown takes the place of the three-month closed La'zeez in San Francisco (25 Mason St., at Market Street), making this the third restaurant for Foster, and the third in the Hotel Metropolis, which is attached to the restaurant space.

Foster helped open Emmy's Spaghetti Shack and BlueJay Cafe, both of which serve comfort food favorites in San Francisco. He calls Farmer Brown "neo soul," and is looking to make it an upscale rendition of BlueJay (919 Divisadero, near McAllister), with Niman Ranch meats and a mostly organic menu. The part that's really exciting is that he's working with David Roach of Oakland-based nonprofit group Mo' Better Food to use produce from Bay Area African American farmers.

According to its Web site, Mo' Better Food works with farmers in Northern California to get their produce into markets, restaurants and other organizations in predominantly black neighborhoods in the Bay Area.

Christian Ciscle, who was the opening chef at BlueJay, will help Foster orchestrate the stoves, offering dishes like pan-fried free-range chicken, roasted trout and lemon-glazed yams. Foster says he plans to keep entree prices between \$10 and \$15.

Brian Sullivan of San Francisco's Industry Works is redesigning the interior, with recycled wood floors, rustic galvanized steel and watery emerald green walls in the 120-seat dining room and lounge.

A DJ will play soul, blues, jazz and old-school R&B in the lounge, supplemented by live music on occasion.

Foster also plans to open the Eat Shop (4439 Third St., near La Salle Avenue) in San Francisco's Bayview district in the summer. It's just the beginning, he says, of a plan to open more restaurants in redevelopment areas using local African American farmers to provide the produce.

"I am glad to be able to do something that will help the city in a positive way,"



says Foster.

The Eat Shop will serve lunch and dinner, offering items like waffles, homemade biscuits and sandwiches.

Belon's Arenstam, by the way, is now at Americano (8 Mission St., at the Embarcadero) in San Francisco.

Let's hope that 632 Emerson St. (near Hamilton) in Palo Alto isn't cursed, too, as Mantra takes over the failed Stoa space. Previously, the location was home to Higashi West.

The California cuisine theme will remain, but instead of vegetarian food, owner Krishan Miglani is creating a California menu with East Asian touches, primarily Indian.

Chef Robert Cibrowski, most recently at the Atlantis in the Bahamas, is ramping up quickly. The restaurant is set to open later this month and serve dinner nightly. His menu will include dishes like braised, fall-off-the-bone short ribs, potato cakes spiced with fenugreek. A tandoor oven installed in the kitchen will turn out dishes such as tandoori roasted quail with huckleberry compote. Entrees will be in the \$18 to \$26 range.

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Heather Koster, who has designed some Kimpton Group projects, has redesigned the interior with tones of rust and gold and a retooled, elegant bar area.

Miglani also owns Zingari (501 Post St., at Mason), an Italian restaurant in San Francisco. This second venture will include new partner Tony Ashwani.

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The East Bay's answer to Charlie's Chocolate Factory, Cafe Cacao (914 Heinz Ave., near Seventh Street), located in the Scharffen Berger factory, is closed through the end of the month for an overhaul of both the decor and the concept.

Primary owner Ray Klein says he is taking the cafe back to its original concept, offering lunch and, in the bakery, focusing on desserts. The cafe will no longer serve dinner.

Berkeley architect Kava Massih will put in hardwood flooring and banquettes to offer more seating. The white tablecloths have been retired in favor of a more casual setting to nibble panini or try one of pastry chef's Claire Legas' chocolaty desserts -- made with Scharffenberger chocolate, natch.

The cafe should open by March 1, and will serve from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily.

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Boulevard, has even more reason to celebrate the tearing down of the freeway overpass. Businesses are flocking to the area, including plenty of dining options.

The two newest, on dueling corners, are Cafe Grillades (501 Hayes, at Octavia) and La Boulange (500 Hayes, at Octavia), both set to open in March.

Cafe Grillades, an offshoot of Crepes du Monde of San Bruno, offers savory and sweet crepes, panini and couscous platters. There's counter seating and a dining room that seats 125, with 16 tables outside. Most dishes are priced under \$10, including kebabs made with halal meat and served with fries, salad and garlic bread.

The cafe will serve breakfast, lunch and dinner daily, and will be open until midnight on Friday and Saturday.

Across the street, Pascal Rigo's latest La Boulange will mirror his other bakeries around the city, marked by his signature pumpin-colored awning.

Like other La Boulange locations, this one will offer homemade pastry, sandwiches, salads and soups. Hours are 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily.

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Several San Francisco restaurant owners are expected to speak today at a City Hall public hearing on the health care ordinance that Supervisor Tom Ammiano

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put on the table last November.

The proposal would require businesses with at least 20 employees, including part-time workers, to put money into a fund to cover health care costs; this would also apply to some restaurants that already provide health insurance. Ammiano has since lowered the amount from \$345 per employee to \$50 to \$75.




While Ammiano's side says that any amount of coverage will save money, especially if it provides preventative treatment, some restaurateurs say that this might force them to lay off employees or even close their businesses.

Stay tuned for more as this issue unfolds.

*Amanda Berne is a Chronicle staff writer. E-mail comments to her at [aberne@sfchronicle.com](mailto:aberne@sfchronicle.com).*

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