

Former Dockside to Be Sag Harbor Kitchen



The old Dockside restaurant in Sag Harbor, seen here during its final weekend of operation last fall, has a new owner and chef.

By Christopher Gangemi

April 27, 2023

A new restaurant with a simple name, Sag Harbor Kitchen, will open at the Sag Harbor American Legion, at 26 Bay Street, on June 15, where the beloved Dockside operated for 26 years. A soft opening featuring a pared down menu will be available beginning Memorial Day.

Sag Harbor Kitchen will be run by Melissa O'Donnell, a successful Manhattan chef who has earned five Michelin Bib Gourmand awards at three different restaurants.

The Bib Gourmand isn't as well known as the other Michelin awards. The Bib focuses more on value. "This value-for-money award proves that great food doesn't have to come with a hefty price tag!" explains the Michelin guide. Perhaps this means Sag Harbor Kitchen will be a somewhat affordable dining option.

Last fall, it was reported that Eric and Adam Miller of Rita Cantina fame would open the Bay Street Tavern as partners with Adam Potter, who owns the lease on the restaurant space in the Legion. The Miller brothers bowed out a couple of months ago to focus on their existing business.

"I've been coming to Sag for many years, and this opportunity to make this my next chapter is a dream come true," Ms. O'Donnell said in a press release. The concept for the restaurant is to be "new and novel, and at the same time feel like it's always been there" with a menu that promises to be "unique to the area."

Exactly what will be on the menu or at what cost, Ms. O'Donnell said she's not quite ready to disclose. "Stay tuned," she wrote in an email. Whatever is served, Mr. Potter hopes Ms. O'Donnell's cooking will keep the seats as full as they were at Dockside.

"We're tremendously excited to have Melissa on board and we recognize this restaurant is an important part of the Sag Harbor community. I'm pleased to continue to support the American Legion. Veterans are the backbone of our country," he said by phone.

Mr. Potter, perhaps best known locally as head of the nonprofit Friends of Bay Street, and for his large mixed-use affordable housing proposal for Sag Harbor Village, is increasing his profile in the South Fork food scene. He owns Brent's in Amagansett and is at work on a new concept in East Hampton Village, which he hopes will be open in time for the season.

Sag Harbor Kitchen has "reimagined the classic space, blending contemporary design with nostalgic charm to create a unique hospitality experience that celebrates the maritime roots of the community," according to the release.

However, it also mentions a "fire table," something that whalers returning to shore in 1840 probably didn't have.

Ms. O'Donnell described it in an email as more like a fire pit table, with "genuine flames in the center of an outdoor table that will be for those enjoying the outdoor lounge." The outdoor lounge will also include more seating for dining and will be called the Foredeck.

The release credited Ms. O'Donnell's first restaurant, Stella, as introducing "the concept of communal dining to the New York restaurant scene." The communal table, in fact, may be more reminiscent of a whaling ship than the fire tables on the Foredeck lounge. Nonetheless, Ms. O'Donnell promises that introverts and small parties will still be able to find cozy tables for more privacy.

"This is not a pop-up," Ms. O'Donnell said in an email, despite other reporting to the contrary. However, it should be noted that since she is not an owner, she might be a pop-up chef in Sag Harbor Kitchen.

The restaurant will be open March through December. Lunch and dinner will be served every day, with occasional special events "such as apres-beach or after-dinner events." In a departure from Dockside, which was resolutely reservation-free, the new restaurant will accept reservations for at least some tables each night.

The restaurant is partnering with Kittch, a food network that live streams chefs, allows them to share recipes, and creates "video community" for people who love to cook.

So, while you're waiting for your food at Sag Harbor Kitchen, kicking back at your fire table on the Foredeck, someone in Oklahoma could be watching as it's prepared.