

## 15 MINUTES

### Rolling on the range

Although they once promised each other they'd never open a restaurant together (knowing the considerable work that comes with it), married couple Steven Hall and Gina Tropea Hall are currently going back on that agreement. With their combination of business and cooking experience, Steven (who helped launch Winchester Goose) and Gina (who ran Humboldt Cafe with her mom) were excited to use the Winchester's old location to create their own bar and restaurant, The Bank Club. But after the space proved to be too small for their renovations and the lease fell through, they've turned their efforts toward a food trailer as their interim project before establishing a brick-and-mortar location. With the help of chef Emily Porter, Stagecoach is now up and running (or parked) around Chico, providing a tasty, rotating menu featuring various cuisines. Steven recently sat down with the CN&R to discuss the truck.

#### What's the story behind your business name(s)?

The Bank Club was going to be our bar/restaurant at the corner of Eighth and Broadway. We were bringing back the old business that lived at that corner from 1937-1979. We got really excited about it and branded ourselves. Before we found out the lease



PHOTO BY RACHEL BUSH

wasn't going to work, we'd started social media and bought a business license. Then when we went to get a food trailer, we wanted to be careful because it's not The Bank Club. It's a few of us from The Bank Club doing a side-hustle. We wanted a name that would tie the two together and Matthew Heyden (a work consultant) thought of Stagecoach. Until we open at Bank Club, everything's going to be "brought to you by Bank Club."

#### Describe developing the menu.

We get to work with a pro [Emily]. We spent all summer working together. We set up our own little test kitchen and we played around and had fun, and got to know each other in a culinary and personal way. Emily is rocking the Mediterranean food. She worked at Sultan's Bistro and loves and misses those flavors and she brought them to us and we were like, "Wow, you've got this." She's learning Mexican cuisine from me, we're learning

Chinese from Gina and her mom. Besides gyros, we've done hand-made dumplings, hand pies, and Mexican food. We're in California, so it's a melting pot of cultures and flavors. We try to focus on local ingredients.

#### Favorite dish from the lineup?

I've fallen in love with gyros. I didn't realize how much I liked Mediterranean food until Emily showed me the way.

#### Where can people find you?

For now, watch us on social media (Facebook and Instagram). We've been parked on Eaton Road, but we're putting that on pause for now ... We'll be parked next to ThirdLove every Friday, and we've started parking at Secret Trail on Mondays. Some of our former co-workers from Winchester are [there] bartending; the rest are at Bill's Towne Lounge and Sierra Nevada. We all hang out and we're trying to figure out how to get the band back together.

—RACHEL BUSH

## THE GOODS

### Reflecting on the past



by  
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Another year come and gone—where does the time go? Of course, in 2019, we had the fallout from the Camp Fire, which hurt some businesses but helped others. And we had the continued slide of retail, which claimed Kmart and Forever 21, to name a few of the major outlets to go in Chico.

We also said hello to some new businesses, the biggest of which were Hobby Lobby and Tilly's. I'm partial to mom-and-pop shops, though, and we got a number of them, too, including some Ridge favorites that made the move down the hill.

As a recap, here are the businesses we gained and lost in 2019:

Allies Pub, the taproom for British Bulldog Brewery, opened in a swanky spot downtown serving up proper English ales and meals. Ace Hardware opened across the street from the locally owned True Value Hardware, also new this year. The Brew Kettle came and went—a fun concept, the lounge/beer shop is shutting its doors at the end of 2019. Insomnia Cookies opened up downtown, and its local rival Midnite Munchies opened a physical location in the shack in the Nord Safeway parking lot. (Incidentally—or not—Cream, the cookie shop by the movie theater, closed.)

While we said goodbye to some longtime local favorites—Zucchini & Vine, Leon Bistro, Pete's Restaurant and Brewhouse—they made way for some new faces. Z&V became Little Red Hen Home; chef Ann Leon opened Burban Kitchen in Meriam Park; and Pete's, on the Skyway, was the perfect spot for Casa de Paradiso to reopen after losing its home on the Ridge. While Old Barn Kitchen's spot on Clark Road didn't burn, the owners dove into the space left open by Urban Fresh Fuel in downtown Chico and have fit in quite well.

In other movement downtown, Woodstock's Pizza suffered a major flooding incident in the spring that closed the restaurant. While renovating, it jumped at the opportunity to take over the larger, more visible spot vacated by Crepeville. And Doc Burnstein's Ice Cream Lab slid right into Cold Stone Creamery's empty space.

I'm still lamenting the loss of two of my favorite radio stations, 101.7 (which went easy listening) and 93.9 (now conservative talk radio). I'm now left with ZROCK, which at least plays a decent amount of Tool, and 100.7, whose ads for "La Sales" drive me bonkers.

We also said goodbye to a number of other businesses, both chains and mom-and-pops, this year: 15th Street Cafe, Aaron Bros., Avenue Plus Size Clothing, Bamford Family Farms, The Buzz, Chico Coffee Co., Cocina Cortes, Five by Five Tonics, Great Northern, Hibachi Grill, Hooker Oak Distillery, Milestone Technologies, Panighetti's Eatery, Payless ShoeSource, Red Fly, Roots Catering, Rouse and Revolt, Tacos Pepe.

There also were some big changes for some local businesses this year. Namely, Sierra Nevada Taproom & Restaurant got a major makeover; CaliFlour Foods went from online sales only to being stocked in over 700 retailers; and Jeramie Sabelman, owner/chef of Japanese Blossoms, expanded yet again and opened Synergy inside In Motion Fitness.

Now, what will 2020 bring?

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