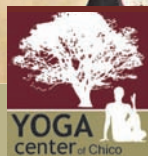


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@ShowLoveThriftTrial by  
wood fireTwo fun  
new Chico  
pizzerias open  
during the  
pandemic**R**oland Allen and Alan Gross had  
just two days to celebrate clear-  
ing the final hurdles to opening  
their new brewery/pizzeria. “We  
passed all our inspections literally  
48 hours before the coronavirus  
lockdown,” Allen said by phone.It wasn’t the momentous debut  
they’d envisioned when they  
embarked on building Mulberrystory &  
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**Jason Cassidy**[jasonc@  
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712-1647[veganpizzariot.com](http://veganpizzariot.com)Open Tues.-Sat.,  
noon-8 p.m.ing to walk inside—now that the  
state’s dine-in restrictions have  
been eased—and see the huge  
dining room fairly empty due to  
physical-distancing requirements.  
The wide-open space with theBrewing Co. on  
the south side  
of town. But  
who includes  
a global  
pandemic  
and shuttered  
economy in  
their business  
plan?The restau-  
rant’s name is  
a nod to the old  
Chico Electric  
Railway that  
used run  
down nearby  
Mulberry  
Street, and it’s a  
bit heartbreak-silver brew tanks in the corner and  
the wood-fired oven extending into  
the room—formerly Chico Auto  
Parts, and before that a bowling  
alley—has a lot of potential as an  
inviting gathering place for large  
groups, but likely won’t be fully  
realized until the pandemic is over.The owners have had to  
reinvent their business plan on the  
fly, which has meant temporarily  
abandoning one of the core tenets  
of their food philosophy:  
Wood-fired pizza should be served  
fresh. There is a small window  
of perfection—pretty much just  
straight out of the blazing oven—  
but Allen and Gross had to adapt.“We were never going to  
deliver pizzas, and probably  
not going to do take-out,” Allen  
said. But Gov. Gavin Newsom’s  
initial order discontinuing dine-in  
services gave them few options.The pizzas are built on a  
Neapolitan-style crust, and the pie  
from my first visit—the Smoked  
Porky (\$17), with smoked pork,  
Yukon gold potatoes, cheese, green  
onions and white garlic sauce—  
didn’t lose much in the ride home.The crust—a little thicker than  
typical wood-fired ones—was still  
light and airy with a nice chewi-  
ness and tasty char on the bottom.Especially enjoyable at home  
was the 32-ounce crowler of  
Electric Rail Pale Ale (\$12), which  
had a moderately malty body to  
balance the hops. With Allen as  
one of the brewmasters (alongside  
Dale Sakschewski), it’s not  
surprising. He has a long résumé  
that started with a decade as an  
assistant brewmaster at Sierra  
Nevada Brewing Co. before start-  
ing Butte Creek Brewing in Chico  
in 1995. For the past seven years,  
he was the brewmaster at Feather  
Falls Casino Brewing Co.Next on my to-drink list is  
Roland’s Redder Ale, a beefed-up  
version—from 5.6 to 7.3 percent  
alcohol by volume—of the signa-  
ture red ale that’s followed Allen  
throughout his career.The brewmaster says that busi-  
ness has been going “OK,” and  
he’s just hoping that COVID-19  
cases don’t rise to point where  
restaurants and bars are forced to  
take a step backward.