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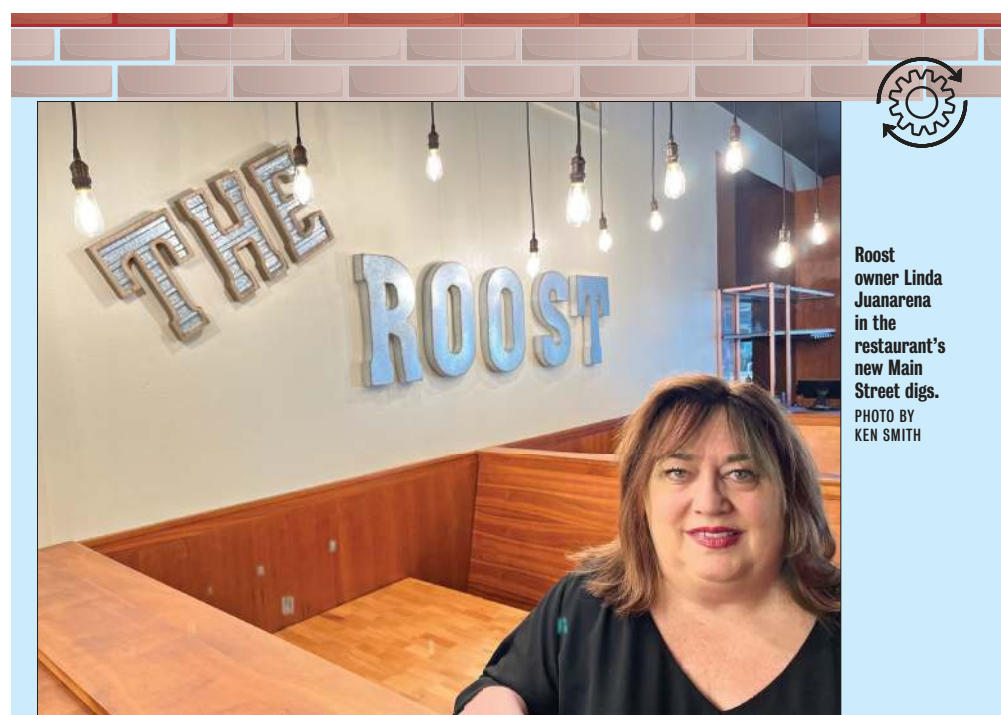
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Roost owner Linda Juanarena in the restaurant's new Main Street digs. PHOTO BY KEN SMITH

## New place to roost

Popular cafe migrating to bigger, better location

With a multi-page menu heavy on comfort food, an old-school lunch counter and a standing army of kitschy chicken statues, The Roost Cafe at 1144 Park Ave. was a bonafide slice of Americana. It may have continued as a Chico mainstay—fueled by a faithful regular following, particularly for weekend brunch hours—but things changed course in 2021.

Roost owner Linda Juanarena, who started the restaurant in 2004, said the property owner informed her last summer he'd be ending the lease so he could raze the building. This left her preparing to change locations in the middle of a pandemic, a move made more urgent by Mother Nature, when, during October's heavy rains, the ceiling started to cave in.

Juanarena found a new home at 817 Main St., which formerly housed Leon Bistro. Preparing to open is an endeavor she said has been plagued by service and supply shortages. Currently awaiting a

final visit from a health inspector, she said she should be allowed to open the doors to the new

**The Roost Cafe**  
817 Main St.  
Instagram @theroostcafechico

Roost in the next few weeks.

Juanarena said she's looking forward to the benefits of having more modern, streamlined digs.

"I always referred to visiting [the old location] as going on an adventure," she said, explaining it was actually two buildings cobbled together. "It was hard to be

super efficient there, and luckily I had great cooks and staff who always made it work. Everything was manual because we just didn't have the space. I've become a manual-mode monster from learning to deal with it, but now everything's changing. The new building is just so much more."

Citing improvements such as central heating and air, a bigger kitchen, more seating, bigger and better bathrooms and a computerized point-of-sale system, Juanarena said the new Roost will maintain some of the old location's soul but will be something "entirely new."

"We're leaving the diner/dive behind," she said. "It wasn't planned that way, but this new space is just so nice and such an opportunity. It will still be great food and great service, and I'm bringing a few of the chickens over; but for the most part, we're going with all new."

Another big improvement—especially for the aforementioned weekend brunch fans—is the addition of a beer and wine license. The Roost can offer mimosas and other drinks as soon as the licensing process is done, which Juanarena anticipates will be this spring.

"Mimosas are important, and we actually lost business not having them all those years," she said. "Even when business was good and we'd be busting at the seams, some people would walk in and ask if we had them, and when we said, 'No,' they'd turn round and walk out."

—KEN SMITH  
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