

Woodlake Tavern is on the move

Comfort food with class, yes, but check out the new events atrium

BY ALLEN PIERLEONI

First it was the high-end Enotria Restaurant and Wine Bar, then it became the whiskey-wine-BBQ-centric Cask & Barrel. For the past three years, the building at Del Paso Boulevard and Arden Way has operated as Woodlake Tavern, an “American gastropub” with the motto “Craft and Comfort.”

“We (chefs) are more craftspeople than artists, but there is a level of artistry here,” said CEO-partner-chef Deneb Williams. “We put a lot of craft into our work – handmade pasta, slow-roasted and smoked meats, from-scratch sauces. That’s what sets us apart from other corner restaurants.”

As for the “comfort” part, “Comfort food is the cornerstone of a good restaurant, but we try to be multicultural in our approach.”

When Williams was visualizing a concept for Woodlake Tavern, he recalled, “I thought, this neighborhood needs a spot where you can sit at the bar and have a burger and a beer, or

come in for an after-work dinner with your spouse. It can also be a special-occasion place, but nothing fancy.”

If not fancy, then definitely classy. “I’ve been in fine dining all my life, so I wanted everything here to have the same attention to detail and be of the same caliber,” he said.

Among the highlights: shrimp ‘n’ grits, prime rib grinder, bargain-priced daily specials, and live music on Friday nights and during Sunday brunch.

Now’s the time to mention that Williams was the executive chef for a decade at the four-star Firehouse in Old Sacramento. His wife, partner-beverage director Elizabeth-Rose Mandalou, formerly of the four-star Ella, is an Advanced Sommelier, one of only three in our area and the only woman.

Enter Joe Pruner, late of Empress Tavern, The Kitchen and OBO’ Italian Table. “He’s the company’s executive chef, and we collaborate on all the menus,” Williams said.



Deneb Williams sees Woodlake Tavern as a combination of class and comfort.

PHOTO BY ANNE STOKES

Another thing: Williams and Mandalou opened Allora modern-Italian restaurant in East Sacramento in 2018 — a four-star destination that, not surprisingly offers a 250-selection wine list.

A major piece of their business has become special events, which are booking at a furious rate. Williams closed his conjoined Uptown Pizza (five Uptown pies made it to the tavern menu) to make room for WM Catering and Events. For an events venue, he recently completed a gorgeous atrium-patio with a retractable roof and waterfall, and is constructing a nearby 40-space parking lot.

“David Hardie (the building’s owner)

thinks outside the box and was crazy enough to go along with me,” Williams said.

As for location, “We’re here a little early, but we’ve positioned ourselves in what I think will be the next big boom for Sacramento,” Williams said.

“Everybody who thinks they know Del Paso Boulevard should come and check it out now. There’s a new entrepreneurial spirit and we’re on the move.”



WOODLAKE TAVERN

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UPCOMING EVENTS

FRIDAY, MARCH 6

First Friday Breakfasts for Innovation & Entrepreneurship
7:30 A.M. | \$10

First Friday Breakfasts for Innovation & Entrepreneurship are back in full swing at our new location. We will kick off with a panel discussion around Innovation in Housing, including Tiny Homes, Land Trusts, Container Homes and more.

The Creator’s Place at The Artisan
1901 Del Paso Blvd.
Sacramento, CA

SATURDAY, MARCH 7

The Princess Book Club
4 P.M. | FREE

Interact, ask questions and hear a multitude of authors speak on various genres. There were also be a comedian, singer and live painting. Books and artwork will be available for purchase. Wine and hors d’oeuvres will be served.

Carol’s Books
1913 Del Paso Blvd.
Sacramento, CA

TUESDAY, MARCH 10

Yeah Buddy! Comedy Night
8 P.M. | FREE

Live stand-up comedy show featuring the funniest comedians in the Sacramento area, hosted by comedian/actor Buddy Rahming.

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