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With La Finestra coming to Moraga, owner still dreams of the Hacienda

By Nick Marnell



Jeff Assadi Photo Andy Scheck

After losing La Finestra Ristorante in a devastating fire, and having to walk away at the last minute from a deal for a replacement restaurant, Jeff Assadi could understandably feel a bit anxious over the challenges of reopening his business.

But Assadi comes across as anything but anxious. The restaurant owner remains positive and upbeat about the planned October opening of his Sicilian-influenced Italian restaurant in the Moraga Shopping Center.

"I am glad an opportunity presented itself and I am really happy to be part of the Moraga community," Assadi said.

La Finestra was completely destroyed in the 2017 Lafayette Circle fire. Crushed by such a devastating loss, Assadi vowed to reopen his restaurant, if for no other reason than to take care of his loyal, longtime employees and customers. "We wanted to stay in Lafayette, but we could not find a place in Lafayette," Assadi said.

An unexpected opportunity came to Assadi in mid-2018: a chance to lease space at the Hacienda de las Flores, the historic structure and landmark in the town of Moraga. But again Assadi encountered difficulties. The work required to open a restaurant in the building was cost-prohibitive, and he had to pass on the potential deal.

Assadi recently signed a five-year lease for the shuttered Terzetto Restaurant location across from the Moraga Safeway. "No restrictions or build-out needed. No major plumbing or electrical work. Just new equipment needed for the kitchen," Assadi said of his new venue.

The reborn La Finestra will have 3,100 square feet of space, providing room for 50 customers in the main dining area plus a private banquet room that seats 30. The lounge area will feature Bob Athayde of Stanley Middle School on the grand piano and Tony Lavino will again run the dining room.

"We welcome everyone from Lamorinda and the surrounding areas," Assadi said.

As thrilled as Assadi is about his grand reopening in the Moraga Shopping Center, he mused about the lost Moraga opportunity of earlier this year.

"My dream one day is to open a restaurant in the Hacienda," Assadi said. "And I hope that dream comes true."

According to Town Manager Cynthia Battenberg, Moraga remains interested in establishing a partnership with a restaurateur to operate at the Hacienda, and is working out a strategy which includes applying for county grant money and building out a restaurant shell.

Reach the reporter at: nick@lamorindaweekly.com

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