

M&J Restaurant Has New Management

By **Charlotte Balcomb Lane**

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DINING TIPS & TABS: The holiday season has brought a sackful of changes to the area restaurant scene. Here are some:

M&J REBORN— UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT: The former M&J Sanitary Tortilla Factory in Downtown, which closed in June after 30 years in business, just reopened under new management.

The restaurant will still be called M&J, though it is run by Felipe Ronquillo Acosta, the former owner of the Chihuahua Buffet on Osuna.

That restaurant closed in August.

The new M&J opened last week in about one-third of the space that housed the old M&J.

Acosta said he is leasing the restaurant equipment from the former owners Bea and Jake Montoya, and has permission to use the familiar name.

His menu will be similar to the original but will include salads, a soup of the day and desserts.

The reborn M&J is at 403 Second Street and the telephone number is 243-2444.

Next door is a separate business that shares the former restaurant space called Los Chileros de Nuevo Mexico. Los Chileros is a wholesale food company that produces a line of spice and seasoning blends and other New Mexico food products.

Los Chileros owner Chuck Waghorne said he has been in business in Santa Fe since the early 1980s, but recently acquired other food companies and moved to Albuquerque to consolidate them. Some of the other lines he produces are Santa Fe Gourmet, Purple Onion and Native Flavor.

Los Chileros takes about two-thirds of the space at 401 Second Street.

Waghorne also bought the tortilla-making equipment and will soon begin producing tortillas.

The telephone number at Los Chileros is 768-1100.

Commercial real estate agent Tim Townes negotiated both leases for his family's business, Townes Family Enterprises, which has owned the Downtown building since the early 1970s. Townes said he put about \$60,000 into bring the building fully up to code.

Asian Grill has bitten the proverbial dust.

However, the building has already reopened as a franchise of the Owl Cafe. The new Owl opened Nov. 29.

Operator Frank Marcello said the fast-casual Asian concept never caught on among diners in the Shops @25 in the !25 development. He said customers at his other restaurants, Copeland's Famous New Orleans and Zea Rotisserie Grill, kept requesting a good green chile cheeseburger.

Marcello said he licensed the use of the Owl name and menu from Bob Middleton and Ski Martin who operate the Owl Cafe at 800 Eubank NE.

Middleton and Martin have the license to use the Owl name, which began in San Antonio, N.M., in 1949.

The new Owl will serve the same diner menu, with an emphasis on green chile cheeseburgers, fries, milkshakes, malts and sandwiches. No breakfast.

It's open from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily. The telephone number is 344-9964.

SO LONG BLUE, HELLO CHAMA: The Blue Corn Cafe and Brewery is changing its name and its concept to become Chama River Brewing Co.

The restaurant closed at the end of November for a complete remodeling inside and out, said general manager Jack Carrigan. It should reopen in mid-January, offering a new menu, a cigar lounge and a new decor.

"We wanted to create a menu that would showcase our microbrew beers," said Carrigan.

The "upscale brewpub" menu is still under development, Carrigan said, but should include some dishes that are already popular at the Rio Chama Steakhouse in Santa Fe. Some offerings might be fondue appetizers, steaks, burgers, seafood and salads.

Chama River Brewing Co. is a sister property to La Casa Sena and the Rio Chama Steakhouse in Santa Fe, which are all operated by parent company Santa Fe Dining.

The Blue Corn in Downtown at Second and Central Avenue will also change its name to Chama River Brewing Co.

HELLO, TONY: Albuquerque is getting its first Tony Roma's next spring. The North Miami Beach-based steak-and-rib restaurant is moving into the long-vacant Marie Callender's on the West Side's "Restaurant Row."

After the building gets a complete face-lift, including a change of color schemes, it should reopen in March or April, said partner Sam Kassam.

Kassam and his son, Tariq Kassam, also own the historic Route 66 landmark El Vado Hotel, on East Central across from the Albuquerque Biopark. That property is for sale.

Tony Roma's, which is credited with pioneering the "baby back ribs" craze, opened in 1972 in North Miami Beach. There are now 260 franchise restaurants in 27 countries.

NEW GROCERY STORE IN NORTH ALBUQUERQUE ACRES: The long-abandoned Furr's supermarket at 8100 Ventura NE at Paseo del Norte is being renovated to become a Raley's Superstore.

The Raley's should open in the summer of 2005 with a seafood counter, bakery and cafe.

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