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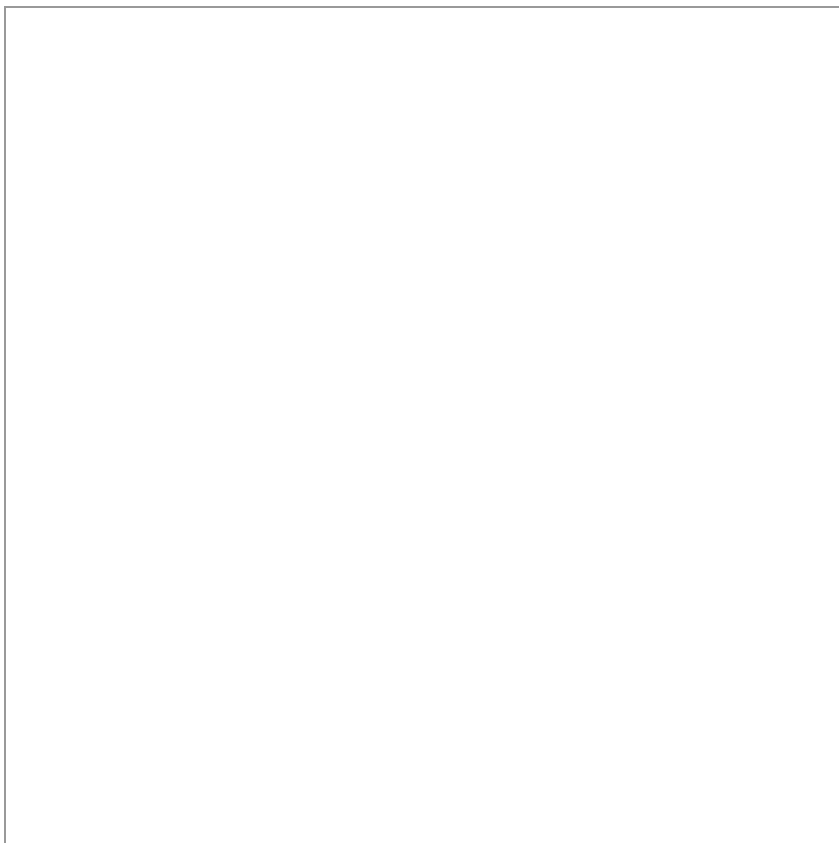
ALLSTON BRIGHTON

Allston Regina Pizzeria, formerly Sports Depot, makes debut

Posted by Matt Rocheleau October 26, 2010 11:14 AM

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The pizzeria opened its 7,300 square-foot Allston location Wednesday in the former H.H. Richardson-designed train station, a historic landmark built in 1893.

By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

The Allston building that housed the Sports Depot bar and restaurant for 22 years, reopened Wednesday as a Regina Pizzeria.

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Officially dubbed Regina Pizzeria at the Depot, the 330-seat space at 353 Cambridge St. looks to attract former Sports Depot patrons, as well as newcomers and fans of the local pizza chain,

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said Christina Chmura, president of the pizza company's media relations firm.

The restaurant features a full, 32-seat, sports-themed bar - complete with big screen TVs. Its food menu includes original favorites along with some new additions, said Chmura, of East Coast Associates in Beverly.

The interior design, full bar concept and food menu resembles the chain's Medford location -- the only other Regina Pizzeria with a full bar, she said Tuesday.

However, with some exposed granite walls, original stained glass windows, kingpin trestles overhead and a former ticket booth window all still intact, the look inside also makes use of unique characteristics of the building - a historic landmark and former train station built in 1893.

"I walked in here and I said, 'I have to have this place,'" said company CEO Bob Taft, while giving a tour of the new space on opening night. "It's got such charm."

Another unique aspect: commuter rail trains still rumble feet away from the rear of the building, and windows along the back wall provide a view of the trains, and cars on the Mass Pike, as they whiz by.

The pizzeria and its 75 member staff offer entrées, like brick-oven pizza, pasta, sandwiches, and calzones, along with appetizers, soup, salads and a separate bar menu. The location also features Curbside To Go and delivery through an outside company, Dining In.

There was no grand opening Wednesday; the restaurant simply opened its doors at 4 p.m. Regular business hours are from 11 a.m. to 1 a.m.

The restaurant began its hiring process in late September, according to its Twitter account.

The acclaimed pizza chain, founded by the Polcari family, opened its first spot in the North End nearly 85 years ago. The Allston space joins 21 other Regina Pizzeria and Polacari locations currently open in Massachusetts and New Hampshire and owned by chain's owners, Boston Restaurants Associates based in Lynn.

Taft said the company is looking closely at opening restaurants in both Quincy and Waltham.

E-mail Matt Rocheleau at mjrochele@gmail.com.

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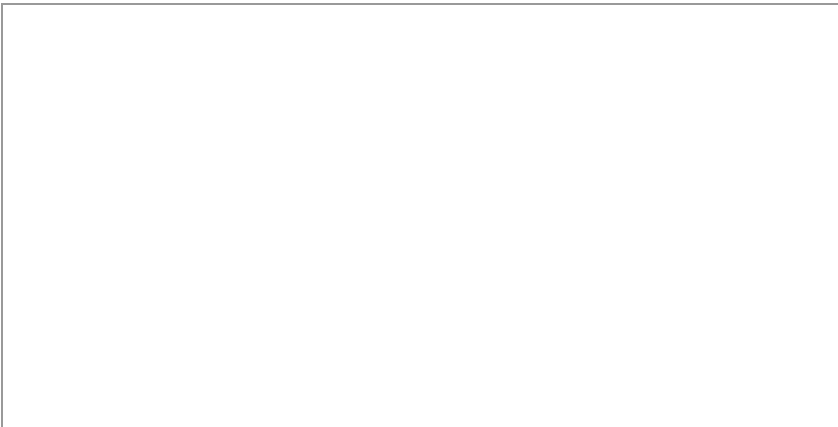
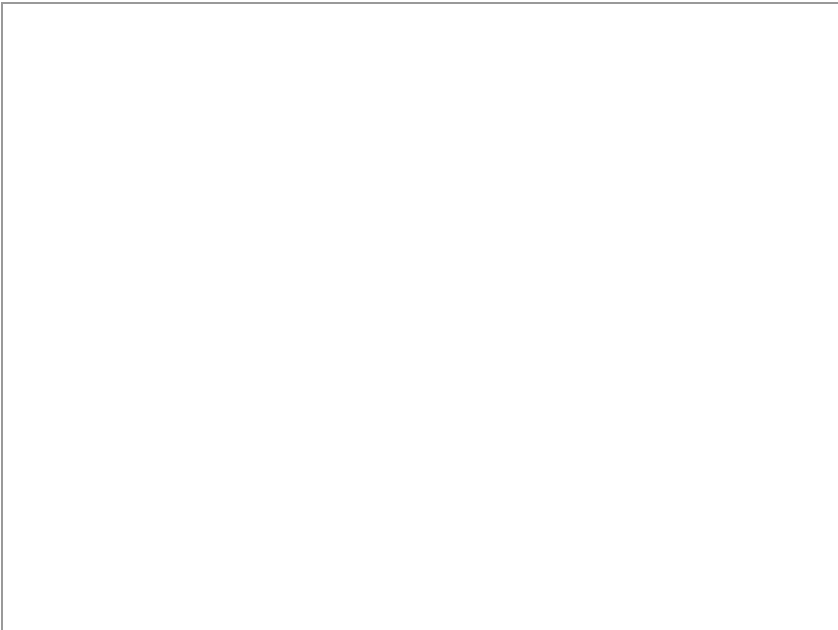
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(Matt Rocheleau for Boston.com)

Photos from the pizzeria's debut evening: On top, a look inside the pizzeria's oven-lined kitchen. Next, a look through what was once the former train station's ticket window. And, on the bottom, Neighborhood residents Ethan Calabritto and his dad Eddy enjoy one of the first meals cooked at the new restaurant.

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