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WEST ROXBURY

Neighborhood bar and bistro Porter Cafe opens on Centre Street

Posted by Matt Rocheleau June 22, 2011 03:08 PM

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(Courtesy: Porter Cafe)

Porter Cafe chef Jimmy Whelen prepares food in the bistro's open kitchen

By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

A new locally owned neighborhood bar and bistro has opened along Centre Street in West Roxbury.

The Porter Cafe quietly went into operation this month, but the cozy, 40-seat space has had a busy first two weeks, management said.

"We found a great opportunity in West Roxbury," said co-owner Dermot Loftus. "Having lived in the neighborhood for a number of years, I feel there was an opening for a neighborhood bar and bistro -- a place for the locals to walk to."

The former art gallery space features a long bar along one wall with counter space for food and drinks. Lining the opposite wall are two booths on either end with a mix of bench and table seating in between. There are also a couple of tables on a patio out front.

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The restaurant's open kitchen allows patrons to watch their food and drinks being prepared from virtually any seat. There are two small TV's on either end of the bar. There is a large mirror behind the bar and another on a back wall, which the owners said fits with the bistro's open feel.

Fourteen craft beers are available on draught, along with over 50 other drink options in a mix of standard-size and large bottles as well as cans. The list of available wines by the glass or bottle is growing.

Porter Cafe will staff between six to eight full-time, and around the same number of part-time, workers. Loftus said he and co-owner Paul Murphy plan to have the restaurant's wait staff and bartenders to be able to make menu recommendations based on customer's dining experience. Six to

"People enjoy the stories of beer and wine, and about their food," he said. "I would hope when you get comfortable here you'll walk by the kitchen and talk to Jimmy [Whelen]," the chef, who has experience at other Boston restaurants, including Saint and Tremont 647.

The owners say the restaurant, open during evenings seven days a week, has a relaxed, pub-style atmosphere with a dedication to locally-produced and "quality food that makes you happy."

Among the most-popular food selections thus far have been the seared sea scallops, pea and bacon risotto, the grilled porterhouse pork chop with crushed Yukon potatoes, asparagus and stone fruit mustard. Frequently-ordered appetizers includes the potato and cheese pierogies with cabbage and sour cream and the grilled fish tacos with salsa and cilantro lime cream.

More often than not, at least one of the two owners will be at the restaurant, which they said received instrumental help opening from the staff of West Roxbury Main Streets. The duo met while bartending at the Beacon Street Tavern in Brookline. They shared what they called "every bartender's dream" of wanting to own their own establishment one day.

They each have 20 years of restaurant industry experience and also shared an Irish heritage. Loftus is originally from Bray, Ireland, a town in Wicklow. He lives in West Roxbury now and has been in the Boston area for eight years. Murphy is a Dublin native. He lived in California for seven years before moving the Boston area around 12 years ago. He's currently a Mission Hill resident.

The restaurant opened in a space adjacent to where a 2007 fire broke out. To read more about that commercial strip's rebuilding process, [click here](#).

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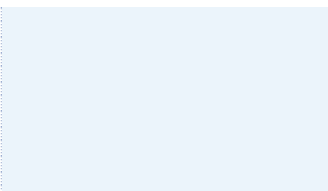
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