

## Diablo Dish—January 2010

Walnut Creek gets modern Chinese and Livermore adds a lounge, and everyone in the Bay is eating pizza. All that and more in the Dish!

BY JULIE MILLER DOWLING

Eric Zhang's **Modern China Café** was due to open last month in Walnut Creek, replacing the shuttered San Franciscan restaurant. A former co-owner of Zheng Long, Zhang brought in that restaurant's former chef to execute a menu of contemporary Chinese cuisine. Featuring an outdoor patio, lounge, and full bar, Modern China Café also offers a wine list compiled by a former sommelier at New York's famed Le Cirque, as well as daily dim sum prepared by a chef hired from Dublin's **Koi Garden**.

More lounge news: **Sanctuary Ultra Lounge** was set for a mid-December move into Firehouse Bistro & Books' old spot on Livermore's hopping First Street. Sanctuary, across from the new **Sapphire Restaurant & Lounge**, promises a "hip atmosphere," with sofas, lounge chairs, backroom pool table, wireless Internet, cocktails and tapas, and a 2 a.m. closing time on weekends.

Livermore's **First Street Alehouse** plans to move next door, leaving the tiny 1,300-square-foot spot it outgrew and expanding into a roomier 6,000 square feet. Owner Ron Witherspoon says the new eatery will have the same price point and atmosphere, with an "increase in food quality."

Not sure if that wine in your fridge will work in your white wine sauce recipe? A new Concord-based winery, **Academie Wines**, takes out the guesswork, with its four premium wines made just for cooking. Find them at Berkeley's Star Grocery, Pleasant Hill Market, and Lunardi's in Walnut Creek.

**Planet Raw** opened in Pleasant Hill in November, serving its organic, uncooked concoctions, like walnut and pumpkin pâté and banana cream pie, to East Bay raw-food fans. Owners also hope to open a Walnut Creek location.

Alborz Persian Restaurant, with locations in Berkeley and San Francisco, was set to open a new location in Walnut Creek, replacing Tin's Tea House.

Gather Restaurant was set for a December opening in the new David Brower Center, just off the UC Berkeley campus. The über-green restaurant—it even has a full organic bar—will serve its seasonal, sustainable fare for dinner to start, with lunch coming later this month and then breakfast in February.

Folks in the 510 won't have to settle for Round Table with all the new gourmet pizza places popping up. As pizza lovers celebrated the opening of the **Pizzaiolo** spin-off down the street from the Grand Lake Theater, others lined up for Berkeley's popular new **Emilia's Pizzeria**, serving its thin-crust slices on Shattuck. And, coming this spring are Pizzeria Zanna Bianca, which will serve up Italian-style pizzas in the Jack London marketplace, and Addie's Pizza Pie, which will dish out New York-style thin crust on Adeline in Oakland.

Oakland's popular **Mariposa Baking Company** opened a new kiosk in San Francisco's Ferry Building Marketplace, giving San Franciscans the same gluten-free and wheat-free sweets and savories enjoyed by Oaklanders.

Got Dish? E-mail us at [dish@maildiablo.com](mailto:dish@maildiablo.com).

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