

Ophelia's Pizza + Bar opening soon in L&C Tower

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Jun 7, 2023

The 5th Street Group is bringing an old-school Italian neighborhood spot with a modern twist to downtown Nashville.

Ophelia's Pizza + Bar is set to open this month at 401 Church St. Suite 100, on the ground floor of the L&C Tower. It sits just down the street from the group's first Nashville concept, Church and Union Nashville.

“We look for the gap in the marketplace and in this case, we felt like pizza in a fun but approachable way, upscale but not too upscale Italian hit the mark,” Patrick Whalen, co-owner of 5th Street Group, told the Business Journal. “We were thinking along the lines of, if you’re in a coastal Italian town, what would your restaurant look like? What would you want your guests to get out of the space.”

The menu features Italian favorites like lasagna Bolognese and branzino, but the Neapolitan-style pizzas are the pride and joy of chef-partner Jamie Lynch.

Lynch has spent the last eight months perfecting the pizzas, getting the right flavors, crunch and puff of the crust. Ophelia’s will use seasonal ingredients from local farmers markets, as well as importing certain ingredients like its flour, olive oil, cheese and charcuterie from Italy.

“It’s like getting to do a painting every day but you have to do the same painting. We get to work within the medium and have fun with it and I think that’s really exciting,” Lynch said. “It’s our opportunity to really touch everybody, from a five-year old kid with their parents to somebody who tried pizza in Naples on a trip and gets transported into this memory. To me, that’s awesome and the romantic part of what we do.”

Ophelia’s has 60 seats inside, a 10-person bar and an outdoor patio along Fourth Avenue.

Nashville-based Sara Ray Interior Design, architecture firm The Bradley Projects and Certified Construction Services worked with the 5th Street Group to build out the space.

Almost 600 pieces of art hand-picked by the team dawn the leather-banquette lined walls of the 3,383-square-foot restaurant. Some were taken by Whalen’s grandfather, a World War II veteran. Others are the same pictures that hung in Whalen’s first bar concept in 2006, The Basement, in Hoboken, New Jersey.

“[My grandfather] took all these pictures of Italy when he traveled and they adorned my house when I grew up,” Whalen said. “We’re trying to make it feel personal when you go inside and it’s immersive, there is a story everywhere.”

Ophelia’s will start with dinner service Tuesday to Sunday from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m., and offer the after-dinner party on Friday and Saturday from 10:30 p.m. to 3 a.m. The latter will feature a DJ or live music, cocktails, late night food and desserts.

Eventually, Ophelia’s will be open for lunch as well. The 5th Street Group hopes Ophelia’s will be a place for both tourists and locals, a place to grab a bite before heading back to the office, a post-work drink or a night out.

Ophelia’s will have 40 to 50 employees. The 5th Street Group is 100% staffed in the kitchen, which it attributes to its Tip the Kitchen initiative implemented two years ago.

Recently clearing the \$3 million mark in additional funds for staff, the program allows guests to leave a tip for the kitchen staff, which the 5th Street Group will match up to \$250 per day at all restaurants.

“We believe that it’s the future of hospitality,” Lynch said. “There’s a couple of rules on why this works. The first part of it is, it has to be optional. ... They do it because they want to. The second rule is that it has to be earned. ... And then going back to partnership, we share in it. Whatever our guest decides they want to leave, we’ll match up to that \$250 a day per restaurant.”

The 5th Street Group says the energy of downtown Nashville, rivals the energy of the country’s major metros.

“We are inspired by the city because there’s such great energy here. There’s such a positive attitude from most of the people, especially downtown. ... It’s one of the most energized customer bases that we’ve seen and that level of energy is consistent with New York City, Las Vegas, Miami and L.A., the major centers of retail and tourism,” Whalen said. “Even though the secret is getting out, we still feel like we are in on the secret a little bit. We wanted to continue to grow before the secret gets out to everybody.”