

2 new restaurants coming to Old Bridge under veteran chef

Jenna Intersimone, Bridgewater Courier News Published 8:00 a.m. ET April 17, 2019 | Updated 10:45 a.m. ET April 17, 2019

OLD BRIDGE – Monmouth County residents already know that Steven Botta, who is the executive chef and co-owner of the popular Brando's Citi Cucina in Asbury Park and Osteria Cucina Rustica in Marlboro, is a local authority on Italian cuisine. But soon, Middlesex County residents will know it, too.

Botta, who was also part of the team that resurrected Fromagerie in Rumson after it was sold by Chef and Restaurateur David Burke, is opening two new restaurants in Old Bridge – Feast Italian Kitchen and Churrascaria Brazilian Steakhouse – alongside his partner and childhood friend, Angelo Bongiovanni.

Both restaurants will be located in the Shoppes at Old Bridge, with Feast opening at 3899 Route 9 in the early summer and Churrascaria opening at 3889 Route 9 in the late fall.

“Brandos and Osteria are now known as pioneers of New Jersey Italian steakhouses, but Feast is going to be more family-friendly with a lower price point and be more traditional Brooklyn Italian,” said Botta, who grew up in Brooklyn and now resides in Freehold. “However, even though it's at a lower price point, we are still going to do quality pastas and sauces the same way we make them at our other restaurants, plus dishes such as eggplant parmesan, sausage and peppers, and chicken and veal.”

When seeing that the area didn't have any Italian eateries besides the former Bensi, an Italian chain restaurant which was located where Feast will be housed, Botta and Bongiovanni decided that a new Italian restaurant would be an ideal fit.

The two are currently developing the restaurant, which will utilize a rustic décor, brick and plaster details, a pizza and salumi bar as well as a large square bar, which will have a liquor license, which Churrascaria will have also. Feast will seat 150 people in 6,500 square feet.



Feast will open in Old Bridge. (Photo: ~Courtesy of Steven Botta)

Brandos in Asbury Park, which opened in 2011, is known for its traditional Italian-American dishes, some items that aren't usually found in typical Italian eateries as well as homemade pastas and steaks, which Botta said was the first Italian steakhouse in the state. Their other restaurant, Osteria in Marlboro, which opened in 2013, however, serves more authentic Italian dishes which could be found in Italy, with items cooked in a wood oven, as well as steaks and homemade pastas.

"Even at Feast, we're not going to cook anything in advance," said Botta, who is a self-taught chef and never attended culinary school. "It may be difficult, but it's worth it."

READ: [Italian delis that bring real taste of Italy to Central Jersey \(/story/entertainment/dining/2018/10/10/new-jersey-italian-delis/1486445002/\)](#)

It may not have been ideal for Botta and Bongiovanni to open both Feast and Churrascaria at once, however, the opportunity presented itself when Bensi closed, as well as a Hudson City Savings Bank and a yoga shop next door.



Cuisine from Steven Botta's Osteria Cucina Rustica in Marlboro. (Photo: ~Courtesy of Steven Botta)

After doing some research, the two determined that there was a void of Brazilian cuisine in the immediate area and decided to do some research and take the plunge. Churrascaria will be able to seat 130 people in its 550-square-feet, which will also have an open kitchen where guests will be able to see the meats being cooked on skewers. An overseeing chef who is experienced in Churrasco-style cooking will be named, while Botta will be the executive chef, as he is for all of the restaurants in the group.

READ: [Espo's Italian restaurant closed in Raritan: 'An end of an era' \(/story/news/local/somerset-county/2018/12/29/espos-italian-restaurant-raritan-remembered/2440039002/\)](#)

Botta, who formerly was the CEO of Paradigm Title Group as well as the partner in a mortgage bank, saw that Asbury Park was an up-and-coming area when he was looking for a restaurant in 2011, so he thought it would be a fitting choice for his the eatery.



Cuisine from Steven Bottta's Osteria Cucina Rustica in Marlboro. (Photo: ~Courtesy of Steven Bottta)

"Now I look like a genius, but it could have gone the other way," laughed Bottta.

When Bottta purchased the former Carmine's, it was losing about \$250,000 a year, he said. Now, it's a flourishing Asbury Park eatery.

Bottta said that throughout the years, he has noticed that the New Jersey culinary scene has undergone a renaissance, now offering a variety of choices for local foodies.

"This state really gives people the opportunity to try new things," said Bottta. "Fifteen years ago, there weren't many choices for quality food, but now, they're endless."



Cuisine from Steven Bottta's Osteria Cucina Rustica in Marlboro. (Photo: ~Courtesy of Steven Bottta)

Feast Italian Kitchen

Where: 3899 Route 9, Old Bridge in the Shoppes at Old Bridge

When: Early summer

Churrascaria Brazilian Steakhouse

Where: 3889 Route 9, Old Bridge in the Shoppes at Old Bridge

When: Late fall

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