

January 29, 2013

Open as of today in Jack London Square is **~THE FORGE~**, a new project that's right on the marina. I had a chance to take a look at this hefty 4,100-square-foot spot last week: it's a masculine and industrial-modern space, featuring 100 seats inside, with some elevated booths in the back and 17 seats at the bar. There's a long communal table made from a steel beam and a glass top, burnt plywood floors, huge windows, and numerous custom-fabricated touches for the restaurant.

The primary focus of the menu is the pizza coming out of the 800-degree Mugnaini oven, which veers from classic Italian picks, like a marinara or margherita, to more inventive kinds, like a pepperoni version that uses knobs of fresh uncured housemade pepperoni, plus the kick of Calabrian peperoncino, thinly sliced red onion, and cream (\$15), or a guanciale pizza with chicories, Castelvetrano olives, and leeks (\$17), which I think begs for an egg on it (\$2). The crust has a light sourdough tang to it, and it was revealed that it's a take on Tartine Bakery's country bread recipe—it also has some smoked sea salt on the crust that will make you want to eat each and every bite. The executive chef is Jeffrey Amber, with pizza consulting by Jeff Krupman of Pizza Hacker, and the sous chef is Jeffrey Hayden.

The rest of the menu highlights some Cali-American dishes, with standouts like mussels in a spicy beer broth (\$12), fried cheese curds from Wisconsin (\$7.50), salads like a deeeelicious Green Goddess with sieved egg (\$10), and a few larger entrées (think meatballs, a burger, and chicken pot pie), with nothing more than \$17. For dessert, you should consider a baked-to-order chocolate chip cookie, with a hint of salt. The menu features 20 craft beers (including 10 beers on tap using a custom-designed, cast-iron tap system), cocktails, and both Cali and European wines.

There's a sure-to-be-popular outdoor area with a view of the marina, with room for 50, plus two blazing fire pits. Le Bon Temps restaurant group is behind the project, with Bob Burke (Pat Kuleto Restaurant Group and Gordon Biersch Brewing Co.), restaurant entrepreneur



The waterfront patio at The Forge. Photo via Facebook.



The pepperoni pizza at The Forge. Photo: © tablehopper.com.



The dining room at The Forge in the evening. Photo: © tablehopper.com.



The blazing oven at The Forge. Photo: © tablehopper.com.

Michael Karp (owner of Barbacoa and Table 24 in Orinda), and architect/designer/builder Andy Byrnes (The Construction Zone Ltd.). Opening hours are 11am-2pm and then 5pm onward—it will be open continuously soon. 66 Franklin St. at 1st St., Oakland, 510-268-3200.

Very nearby is **~LUNGOMARE~** opening on Thursday February 7th in the former Miss Pearl's Jam House by Chris Pastena (Chop Bar), Temoor Noor (Grand Tavern), and Tom Henderson. The chef is Craig DiFonzo (previously Cantinetta Piero in Yountville), preparing a Northern Italian menu, with some coastal and rustic dishes (look for seafood—including grilled whole fish and crudo—handmade pastas, pizza, and house-cured meats). Jim Maxwell of Architects II is outfitting the place with two heated patios (80 seats), a pizza oven, raw bar, rotisserie, pasta room, bar area, main dining room (120 seats), and a private dining room, plus there will be an adjacent café for morning coffee service with Roast Coffee (opening February 11th). Cocktails will also be available (created by Paul Christensen, formerly of Oakland's Haven), and plenty of wines, with an emphasis on those from coastal regions. Linden Street Brewery is creating custom beers just for Lungomare. After opening weekend festivities, Lungomare will be open for breakfast (in the café), lunch, and dinner seven days a week. 1 Broadway St. at Water, Oakland, 510-444-7171.

Now open in Glenview is **~PARK BURGER~**, a casual burger place that a reader tells me is making the neighborhood really happy (and yes, it's kid-friendly). The patties are made with Marin Sun Farms grass-fed beef, and there's a variety of fries (garlic or chili cheese) and onion rings, plus hot dogs, shakes, and wine for the adults. Open daily 11am-9pm. 4218 Park Blvd. at Edgewood, Oakland, 510-479-1402.

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