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After a yearlong hiatus, Napa's most eclectic restaurant reopens next week in a new space



Jess Lander
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Managing partner Tim Seberson (from left), chef and co-founder Todd Humphries, and co-founder Richard Miyashiro at the front door of Kitchen Door. After a yearlong hiatus, the decade-old restaurant is reopening in a new downtown Napa space with a cocktail program for the first time. Santiago Mejia/The Chronicle

Following a yearlong closure, Napa's globally inspired Kitchen Door is gearing up to reopen in a new downtown location with a full bar — a first in the beloved restaurant's 11-year history.

When the new Kitchen Door opens on June 7 at 1300 First St., within the buzzy First Street Napa development, loyal patrons will be relieved to find many staples, like the cream of mushroom soup, banh mi sandwiches and Korean short ribs. But they will also discover fresh menu items, including build-your-own Vietnamese lettuce cups and fish a la plancha with truffle meunière sauce. Plus, another first: steak.

Kitchen Door opened in 2011 at Oxbow Public Market. It started as a passion project from the founders of Napa's Michelin-starred Martini House in St. Helena — most notably, chef Todd Humphries — which closed in 2010. The goal for Kitchen Door was to create a gathering place for the Napa community, especially local chefs. "We tried to create something from what we, industry people, like to eat before and after our shift," said co-founder Richard Miyashiro.

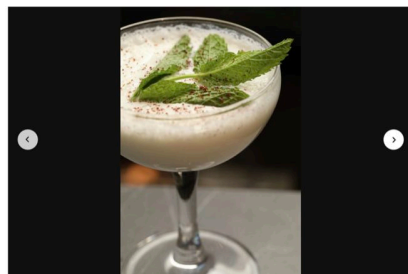
Over time, the menu transitioned from simple, mostly hand-held fare to international comfort food, from noodles to tacos to pizzas. Kitchen Door developed a passionate following within Napa County while flying under the radar of tourists and the greater Bay Area.

Yet the restaurant had long been searching for an upgrade due to Oxbow's unconventional layout, lack of parking and foot traffic.

When customers enter through the 120-seat restaurant's freshly painted set of red kitchen doors, the first thing they will see is the massive, 20-seat square bar, which is double the size of the previous iteration and the most notable change to the space.

In addition to traditional drinks, the cocktail menu incorporates some unconventional ingredients and flavors, like sumac yogurt in the "Aladdin"-inspired Spice Merchant (vodka, sumac yogurt, lime juice and mint syrup). The Divide is a play on wine-infused cocktails; a concoction of bourbon whiskey, brown sugar simple syrup, lemon juice, egg white and toasted pecan bitters is topped with a red wine float. The restaurant's high-tech Ground Control coffee maker will be used for espresso martinis, and the bar will also serve wine, beer and kombucha on tap.

For food, there are several new options such as Tang, a marinated tofu and vegetable dish that's a homage to Miyashiro's family. Kitchen Door is resurrecting some past favorites, like the churros with ice cream and candy cap mushroom bread pudding. The dedicated kids' menu is also back.



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The Spice Merchant drink (vodka, sumac yogurt, lime juice, mint syrup) is part of Kitchen Door's new cocktail program. Santiago Mejia/The Chronicle



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A new Kitchen Door dish called Tang: brown and red rice, marinated tofu, spring vegetables, carrots, scallions and pickled ginger. Santiago Mejia/The Chronicle

Press Coverage



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Beyond the flashy new bar, the aesthetic feels reminiscent of the former space, with much of the same farmhouse-style decor from before. There's also a wraparound outdoor patio with a firepit that seats 30.

From Humphries' perspective, the kitchen, visible to diners through 24 feet of windows, is the best feature of the new spot. He outfitted it with a line of shiny new chef's toys, like a custom-made gas rotisserie for roast chicken, one of the restaurant's most popular dishes, and a pasta cooker for Kitchen Door's many noodles. Finally, Humphries and executive chef Conor Eser have a kitchen that can keep up with the restaurant's global campaign.

Miyashiro said his vision for the new chapter of Kitchen Door is eight people sharing a table to "each have a dish from a different part of the world, and everyone is happy."

Kitchen Door. Opening June 7: 4:30-9 p.m. Sunday-Thursday; 4:30-10 p.m. Friday-Saturday. 1300 First St., Suite 272, Napa. kitchendoornapa.com

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Churros on house-made vanilla ice cream at Kitchen Door.
Santiago Maja/The Chronicle



Lettuce Cups (vermicelli rice noodles, pickled veg, marinated tofu, bean sprouts, herb salad, house dipping sauce) are a new addition to the Kitchen Door menu.
Santiago Maja/The Chronicle