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Table Talk By Michael Klein

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Slicing up City Avenue pie trade

City Avenue is getting so cheesy.

California Pizza Kitchen, which has been turning out hearth-baked pizzas and such for 10 years at the Court at King of Prussia, this week opened its second regional location at 4040 City Ave. (215-477-8101), next to a Target store. It has a full bar. The new CPK will donate 100 percent of all dine-in pizza sales Monday to Please Touch Museum. (Another CPK is due April 7 in Plymouth Meeting, in the new section where Ikea was; among restaurant tenants will be **Redstone Grill**, **P.F. Chang's** and **Benihana**.)

Also entering the City Avenue pie wars is entrepreneur Tony Altomare, who on Feb. 22 rolls out the flagship **Tony Roni's** location at 4504 City Ave., across from Bala Shopping Center. On the first day, he plans to hand out free slices to folks in traffic.

Altomare, a former financial planner who went into the food biz 11 years ago with Tony A's pizza (now three locations), intends Tony Roni's as a franchise. Because Tony A's

is a common name, he says, he decided to franchise under something new.

Menu will include salads, sandwiches and wraps. He hopes to open Tony Roni'ses in Center City, Havertown, Hatfield and South Jersey this year. Northern Liberties' Jesse Gardner, who also designed Cuba Libre and Vietnam, did the decor.

Coming and going

Sticks & Stones won't break your bones. Or your wallet. Owner Nick Meglino describes his bar, which he hopes to open at 1909 E. Passyunk Ave. in early April, as a hang for the neighborhood. (Meglino last year sold Felicia's at 11th and Ellsworth, opening in about three weeks under Manayunk's Scott and Erin Wallace as **Devil's Den**.) Meglino describes Sticks & Stones' menu as an "eclectic mess" (pizzas, an Italian version of mac and cheese, meat loaf). The name? From a TV show: "I want people to drive by and smile and look at the name. I want to catch them off-guard."

Saturday is the scheduled

opening of a South Jersey branch of **Penang** (480 Route 38 E., Maple Shade 856-755-0188), from a branch of the family that owns the Malaysian BYOB in Chinatown, which just reopened after a renovation. The Penang in Maple Shade will be sibling to those in Edison and West Windsor, N.J.

Vickers Tavern in Exton has closed. Calls seeking comment were not returned.

Changes

The building housing **Ludwig's Garten** (1315 Sansom St.) changed hands last week, spelling the beer hall's demise after eight years. Owner Paul Olivier couldn't be reached, but talk is that he's leaving Philadelphia. Next occupants will be Jason and Delphine Evenchik, who own **Vintage** nearby. Their new place will be called **Time** — as in "time to eat, time to drink." Jason Evenchik says the physical changes will be cosmetic/cleaning. The bar will have 20 beers on tap and more than 50 by the bottle, plus a serious liquor list (single malts,

whiskies, rye). The dining room will have what he called an "old-school country-club menu, but updated" — "nice, like Capital Grill and Smith & Wollensky, but not stuffy." Opening is penciled in for the second week of March.

The space at 38 S. 19th St. that housed **Bootsie's** will become an Indian restaurant called **Ashoka Palace**, specializing in northern Indian cuisine, says owner Kinder Jit Singh, who used to cook at **Taj Majal** and **Passage to India** in Center City. It should open within a month, he says.

At **Jonathan's American Grille** in the Jenkintown train station, brothers Tim and Jonathan Zeigler have switched roles: Jonathan will retain his ownership stake in the restaurant but is easing out of day-to-day management. Tim has taken over as managing partner. Manager Rod Pichon has been promoted to general manager, and chef Shawn Buffert replaces Jesse Fellows in the kitchen. Buffert's new menu features more pastas, lower prices, and comfort foods such as



ED HILLE / Inquirer Staff Photographer

Tony Altomare at his soon-to-be-opened pizza parlor, Tony Roni's, on City Avenue. He sees it as the start of a chain.

meat loaf, short ribs and chicken marsala. Jonathan's will be opening on Mondays for lunch and dinner beginning Monday.

Speaking of comfort foods: WMGK's John DeBella will host the station's Comfort Food Fest at Northern Liberties' **Cescaphe Ballroom** (923 N. Second St.) from 6 to 9 p.m. Feb. 27. Chefs from top eateries will create dishes out of family favorites such as **Manwich** and **Rice-A-Roni**, and judges will name a win-

ner. Among them are Dan Marcantuno from **Brasserie Perrier**, Cary Neff from **Coquette**, Brian Duffy from **Kildare's** and Matthew Levin from **Lacroix at the Rittenhouse**. It's free, but a ticket is required: 215-627-1082, Ext. 3.

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