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New life for city landmark

Revolving restaurant to open in October, feature local fare

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Ruth Bonneville / Winnipeg Free Press Hermanos owner Noel Bernier will reopen the revolving restaurant atop Fort Garry Place in October. The iconic space has sat empty for four years. The new restaurant will feature a made-in-Manitoba menu.

A city landmark and iconic restaurant location will open its doors after a four-year hiatus.

Noel Bernier, who owns two Exchange District restaurants -- Hermanos Steakhouse and Wine Bar and Corrientes Argentine Pizzeria -- said he will finalize negotiations to reopen the revolving restaurant at Fort Garry Place later this month.

The restaurant, to be called Prairie 360, is set to open in October.

Prairie 360 will feature Manitoba, he said, offering a taste of the best the province has to offer.

Ace Burpee and Chrissy Troy of Virgin 103 will participate in a web-based series with the executive chef of Prairie 360 this summer to cultivate culinary inspiration for the restaurant.

"They'll go to farms, Lake Winnipeg fishing, just really explore the root of what is our food and what kind of food we have in Manitoba," Bernier said.

Bernier said he's going to leave most of the decisions regarding specific dishes up to the executive chef once staff is hired.

"But we are going to be very much focused on using Manitoba-grown ingredients as much as possible in all of our food," he said.

The space has been closed since 2008. It had previously been home to the Royal Crown Revolving Restaurant, operated by the Gill Family Trust.

Bernier said he's thrilled to open the space to Winnipeggers again.

"It's just a blessing to have the opportunity to reopen this space to the city, because of not only the fact that it's where it is, and it's view is just absolutely astonishing, but to have the opportunity to do a Manitoba food project and something that can make us all proud to be Winnipeggers. It's a really exciting project," he said.

Jino Distasio, director of the Institute of Urban Studies at the University of Winnipeg, said the revival of the restaurant could transform it into a popular tourist destination once again, especially in light of the future opening of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

"The other piece is this: It's really one of the icons of the downtown and we hate to see those vacant," Distasio said.

"It's visible from all parts of the downtown. It sat empty on top of Fort Garry Place for so many years, so having it reopen really sends a signal that once the museum opens, we really have another tourist destination as well."

Bernier's decision to start a restaurant at the top of Fort Garry Place comes after three landmark city eateries decided to close recently.

Kelekis, the revered burger joint, will close at the end of January after 81 years of being a North End destination.

The Wagon Wheel served its final famous clubhouse in July, when the Norlyn Building, the Wagon Wheel's home for six decades, was torn down to make way for a new hotel.

And Hu's on First, the Asian bistro that sat at the first-base line at Shaw Park, closed on Dec. 31. A new restaurant is expected to move into the space in time for the Winnipeg Goldeyes' season opener.

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