

— HAMPTONS —  
REAL ESTATE SHOWCASE

# Musical Chairs

By Lauren Aitken | May 5, 2016



Another year, another game of restaurant musical chairs. Where, oh where, will our favorite eats be this year? Here's the scoop ... information gathered by our network of spies, especially commercial real estate honcho Hal Zwick of Town & Country Real Estate.

Undoubtedly the most delicious fare will be had at Topping Rose House, the upscale inn whose restaurant was launched in 2012 with star chef Tom Colicchio at the helm. This season the supernova chef Jean-George Vongerichten will be taking the reins and South Fork foodies are poised in anticipation. Oops. Well, at least that's what Page Six reported and which "news" several other publications also ran with.

But a call to the Bridgehampton hotel reveals that the story "was leaked" and "nothing has been written in stone yet." One thing is certain: there have been many changes afoot in the handsome white Greek Revival manse, what with general managers and other staff coming and going over the past few months. At press time we can only hope that Vongerichten will add Topping Rose to his roster of four-star culinary destinations.

Southampton Publick House, a mainstay on the cuisine scene, having plied customers with their micro-brews and casual eats since 1996, will be leaving 40 Bowden Square. The good news is that they're not going far; they will be taking over the Jobs Lane space where the Driver's Seat has been for eons. We hear that a Mexican restaurant will be populating their vacated spot. Bueno!

Zach Erdem, the owner of Southampton's 75 Main (at whose sidewalk café Southamptonites like to see and be seen) has added – not one, but two – other establishments to his portfolio. He's taking over the quaint Southampton spot where Namos Estiatorio dished out fish, and before that Nello Balans (formerly of Madison Avenue's Nello's) served up Italian fare. The deal is especially sweet for Erdem who admits to long ago having been fired by Nello. He will also try his hand at the former barn at 125 Tuckahoe Lane that has been the site for many a nightclub over the years including the long-lived Tavern, and most recently 1Oak, which is not returning for a third season.

## Farewell Fresh

Sadly, it's goodbye to Bridgehampton's Fresh Hamptons, the farm-to-table restaurant owned and operated by renowned Chef Todd Jacobs, who regaled Hamptonites with creatively prepared veggies and other fare for the past three years.

## Ciao Circo

What a shame. After only one season in business, son of New York's Le Cirque powerhouse Sirio Maccione, Mario, has closed the Southampton branch of Circo,

the circus-theme eatery he and his brother Mauro launched in New York in the '90s. We will miss the blue and yellow striped walls and velvety tomato soup. Circo Southampton had followed on the heels of another failed enterprise, a Hamptons branch of Delmonico's, the Manhattan restaurant that was founded in 1837. Let's hope that restaurateur Stratis Morfogen, who will be opening a branch of the Jue Lan Club, his Chelsea Chinese restaurant, will fare better.

Winston's Bar & Grill, another one-season wonder, will also be calling it quits. The Caribbean-themed restaurant, which last year took over Nichol's in East Hampton, is gone. We hear that serial restaurateur Michael Gluckman, who has opened and closed many a local hotspot – most recently Sag Harbor's Madison and Main – is partnering with Shane Dyckman, whose Sag Harbor coffee house Sag Town, is a popular meeting place for caffeine devotees. The scuttlebutt has it that they will be calling their place Service Station, and have conceived it as a year-round casual hangout serving downhome American food – not unlike Nichol's, which left the space in 2014 after 15 years as a local watering hole.

After a mere year in business, Doppio East, the Sag Harbor outpost of a Long Island chain of Italian trattorias, was closed last summer by state tax collectors looking to collect a sales tax debt of more than \$17,000. We hear that it won't be returning this year.

Goodbye to Ciao by the Beach in Montauk, which will be replaced by Arbor, a new spot that promises to serve fresh, local and homemade food.

Amagansett favorite coffee hangout, Jack's Stir Brew, is opening on Division Street in Sag Harbor where Juicy Naam used to dole out smoothies. "He has a cult following," says Zwick. An understatement to be sure.

Now that Fishbar is gone from the dock on Montauk's East Lake Drive, Dave's Grill will be moving into the space.

Hearts and palates were clutched when Espresso, the popular Italian takeout shop in Sag Harbor closed its doors two years ago, after nearly two decades in business. Hurrah! It's back, but this time with a different name – Espresso da Asporto (whatever that means) – in a new space, the former Cigar Bar on Sag Harbor's Main Street. It's been open a few months and is bustling with customers in search of fresh focaccias and pies from their pizza oven.

Rumors are swirling about the place on Sag Harbor's wharf that housed B. Smith for ages and Harlow more recently. Some say the property was bought by Ron Perlman. Others swear that Harlow is coming back. If you know anything, please give us the scoop.