

Good earth, good eats

Bonaterra celebrating grand opening tonight

BY CAITLIN HERRINGTON
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SENECA — With a fresh coat of paint, new floors and a fresh, casual menu, Bonaterra quietly opened the newest restaurant on Ram Cat Alley on Oct. 30.

Tonight, they'll be making a little more noise with a grand opening, celebrating a fresh option for downtown dining with a unique menu and upgraded space.

The craft bar and scratch kitchen was named Bonaterra — which means “good earth” — as a reflection of the menu and the people who eat there.

“I wanted to have a nod to ‘we are what we eat,’” owner Walter Torres said. “Nothing is frozen. That’s why the slogan is scratch kitchen — we make everything from scratch. I’m trying to source everything locally and as fresh as possible.”

Painted in earth tones with plant-themed decorations, Torres said the menu is centered around natural flavors.

“It’s a healthier menu style with a lot of grains, salads, fish, couple of steaks and a few good lamb options,” Torres said. “We have a pretty unique cactus salad and 12 signature cocktails that use a lot of sage, lavender and rosemary.”

While Torres freshened the building’s look and removed the fine-dining atmosphere, he said the menu — tweaked from its initial 87 items — keeps a five-star feel.

“It’s always been a linen restaurant that feels super, super fancy,” he said. “We got rid of all the linens. I don’t think there’s a need to compete with



With a private entrance, the upstairs dining area at Bonaterra features three fireplaces and a full bar, making it the perfect place to host holiday gatherings or birthday celebrations.

high-end restaurants. We’re trying to keep our costs much lower while still providing high-quality, fresh ingredients.”

One of his favorite additions is the upstairs bar, opening up the opportunity for a smaller, more casual feel. It also presents the chance to host large gatherings in a casual setting — complete with a private entrance to avoid the hubbub of diners downstairs. Christmas week is already pretty busy, Torres said, and he expects to host a range of family and business gatherings.

As the menu gets settled and customers become accustomed to menu items such as fried avocado and bread with fig

marmalade, Torres is already planning to expand options as diners demand.

The patio next door will be ready for outdoor dining during warmer weather, and he’s taken note of the request for a bloody Mary bar during the Sunday breakfast and brunch hours. The chicken and waffles, omelets, fresh fruit and bacon and eggs are already staples on Sunday.

For those wary of quinoa and eggplant lasagna, Torres said Bonaterra also offers “traditional, conventional bar food” like burgers, wings and nachos.

The grand opening tonight from 5-9 p.m. is the perfect chance to drop in and take

advantages of specials, but Torres said Bonaterra will be open for A Jazzy Christmas and Downtown Go ‘Round for shoppers to stop in a warm up with a cup of cider.

Overall, he wants people to know the restaurant at 113 Ram Cat Alley isn’t what it used to be.

“A lot of people think of this as a really expensive restaurant because that’s what it’s been for five years,” Torres said. “I wanted to have a concept where it’s a fine dining experience but in a casual environment. I really think that’s what we’ve accomplished here.”



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The menu at Bonaterra focuses on fresh, earthy options at an affordable price, according to owner Walter Torres. "Instead of coming in and leaving with a \$100 bill at the end of a meal, you can come in and eat a great, made-from-scratch meal for \$35 per person," Torres said.