

Fifth Street Market just got a little bit cooler. That's because a couple of months ago, **El Vaquero** got itself a new rock star chef. Not only has Eugene newcomer Gabriel Gil worked for some of the best restaurants in the West (including Castagna in Portland and Santa Fe's Coyote Café), he also spent years working as a punk rock singer, touring the world and opening for the likes of No Doubt.

When his wife decided to enter a doctorate program at UO last year, Gil was happy to move back to the Pacific Northwest. He's passionate about integrating Oregon's incredible bounty into modern, creatively flavored seasonal dishes. "I want to bring a new feel to the food here," he says. "Because there are some really good places [in Eugene], but I think that the food that we're starting to do here is different."

As one might expect from a rocker, Gil also wants his food to be fun. He has fun with flavors and hopes his customers in turn have fun talking about them as they experience the dishes. Current owners Sara Willis and Katie Marcus-Brown, who announced Jan. 28 that they're putting all their area restaurants up for sale, are in sync with Gil. "The premise of Vaquero was and still is we want people to have a fun time," says Marcus-Brown. "I want to stress how happy we are to have him here." (Fifth Street Market, 296 E. 5th St.; 434-8272) — *Kristin Bartus*



PHOTOS BY TODD COOPER

The **Holy Cow Café** in the EMU at the UO is facing pending removal after its contract with the EMU Food Services was not renewed. It will be replaced by Laughing Planet Café in June.

The 10-year contract for Holy Cow ends this year. At a committee hearing, EMU Food Services director John Costello and a panel, including one university student, unanimously decided to not renew the contract. "Not one of those people on that board are regulars at the Holy Cow. Where was the support? They cannot say our numbers are down. We are up," Lavine said. "It's just about business and all about money."

Laughing Planet Café, currently with locations in Portland and one in west Eugene,



On the college-heavy networking site Facebook, a group supporting Holy Cow currently has 138 members. Local vegans have been “tofuing” (that’s vegan for “spam”) fellow students with pleas to save the popular café. A campus group tentatively calling itself the “Holy Cow Crusade” is trying to prevent the loss of Holy Cow on campus. They say it’s not about which restaurant is best but about the UO’s sustainability goals. One of the organizers, Robert Kirkpatrick, says the EMU should have “more organic and sustainable options, not pit the cafés against each other.” Kirkpatrick alleges that during the bidding process the EMU solicited bids from Café Yumm! and Laughing Planet, but that Café Yumm! declined to compete against Holy Cow.

Holy Cow Café is contracted to stay until the end of June. Lavine has no plans to take the café elsewhere. She says, "We are fighting this. We will take everything it takes to stay." — *Mark Arellano*



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