

BIGGER BELLY, RUNNING RABBIT

Popular Eugene bistros move into new digs BY TED SHORACK

Where the Old World meets the Willamette Valley with beef tongue, pork collar, duck leg confit and short ribs: This has been the draw for fans of two local favorites, Rabbit Bistro and Belly. The restaurants have managed to attract loyal patrons despite the limitations of their current locations. Now, both businesses are moving downtown, and in the process becoming bigger and better.

Rabbit Bistro has been tucked away in south Eugene since 2009, when it took the place of Asado Latin Bistro between Market of Choice and Laughing Planet at 29th and Willamette. With a narrow dining area and a bar around the corner, the space has never quite worked for the owners and chef.

Co-owner Cory Stamp says they were very grateful to have obtained the spot at Woodfield Station that they're vacating, but it really wasn't designed to accommodate what they wish to bring to the table.

"It was never meant to be doing what we're doing in it," Stamp says. "There's a lot of hindrances for us being here."

Chef Gabriel Gil has set out to make Rabbit a place with a quality menu in a relatively casual setting, a notion known as bistronomy. Menu options range from mussels and frites to a hanger steak or buffalo brisket.

In providing these sorts of dinner options, Gil has struggled against the current location's diminutive walk-in and cramped kitchen. "I don't have a lot of space to put my products," he says. "I really just have enough to make the dishes that I make."

This in part led to a "no substitutions" rule. But Gil is expecting to be able to be more lenient in the new space in the Broadway Commerce Center at East Broadway and Willamette.



BRENDAN MAHANEY
SETTING UP THE BAR AT
THE NEW BELLY LOCATION

PHOTO BY TRASK BEDORTHA

"We have a chance to go somewhere and do something that we get to design and that will be more ideal for the type of service we want to have," Stamp says.

Belly owner Brendan Mahaney opened the popular restaurant at its current 5th Avenue location in 2008. Belly's revamped digs at 30 E. Broadway, not far from the new Rabbit, contain a good two-thirds more space than the current location, Mahaney says.

Opening shop next to Voodoo Donuts, Belly hopes to see an increase in foot traffic from the nearby Saturday Market and surrounding office buildings. Currently a work in progress, Mahaney says remodeling is about halfway done. "We're hoping to open April 23rd," he says.

This new location opens the door to greater culinary diversity. "We can expand our menu," Mahaney says, with "a broader variety of options."

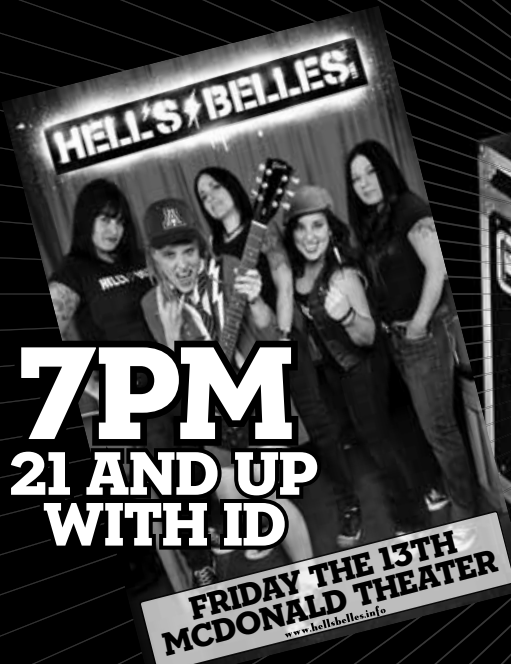
A larger bar and a lounge area are also in the offing. "Just a more inviting space for our customers," Mahaney says. "We just look forward to being a part of the downtown Eugene scene."

Once its up and ready to go, Belly plans on celebrating spring and the beginning of summer, utilizing fresh halibut, fresh salmon and local produce from the Willamette Valley.

Mahaney will operate a full-time taqueria out of the old Belly location, building on Monday's taco night and the crowds it draws with the smell of frying carnitas. ■

LET THERE BE ROCK.

HELLES BELLES LAGER RELEASE PARTY
FRIDAY THE 13TH AT MCDONALD THEATER!

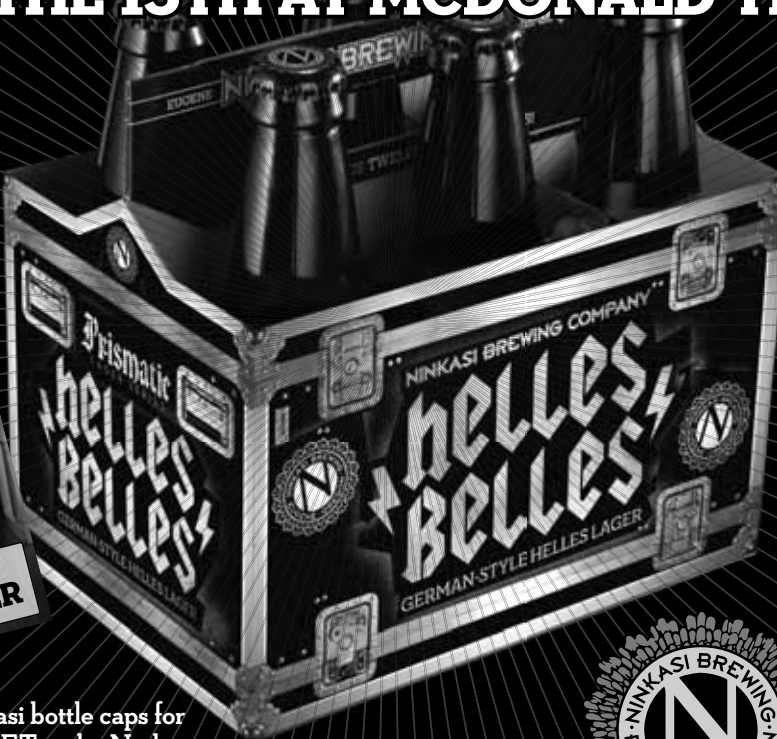


7PM
21 AND UP
WITH ID

FRIDAY THE 13TH
MCDONALD THEATER
www.hellshelles.info

*Redeem three Ninkasi bottle caps for one FREE VIP TICKET at the Ninkasi Tasting Room at 272 Van Buren during business hours. Limit 4 tickets per redemption. 500 tickets will be distributed "first come first serve."

HELLES BELLES
(THE BEER) IS
AVAILABLE IN
6 PACKS AND ON
DRAFT APRIL 15TH!



NINKASI
BREWING
COMPANY

NINKASIBREWING.COM • 272 VAN BUREN, EUGENE, OREGON