

The Italian Stallion

Old-world charm meets West University Neighborhood
at Porcellino Bistro BY WILLIAM KENNEDY

The building at 1290 Patterson is among the West University Neighborhood's last remaining examples of early 20th-century architecture.

Prime for foot traffic, the building, a former coin laundry and tanning salon among other things, is located near the UO campus and PeaceHealth's university location. Only adding to the desirability of the address is a brand-new, five-story mixed retail and residential development right across the street.

So when a woefully underutilized space in the building recently came available, longtime friends Evan Woodward and Cody Verkler knew the time had come to realize their dream of opening a restaurant.

The pair decided on the theme of Italian food, and Porcellino Bistro was born.

"It's been going great," Woodward says. He also teaches culinary arts at Eugene's Network Charter School. "It's been busier than we'd thought. We haven't done any advertising. It's all been word of mouth."

Porcellino serves bistro food: pizza, panini, soups and salads, as well as Italian sodas, tea, coffee and beer (bottled and on tap).

"We want it to be more of a laidback atmosphere," Woodward says, explaining that he and his partner hope to cater to students, elevate the quality of food and keep the prices competitive.

"We knew that we didn't want it to be 'regular campus' — order at the counter," Woodward says. "So instead of serving everything in Styrofoam boxes to go, we serve everything on china," Woodward continues, adding that take-out orders are always welcome. "We want it to be casual, for students, but we want it to be nicer."

Central to Porcellino's atmosphere is a selection of board games, free wi-fi and homemade light fixtures that Woodward's girlfriend made from old Mason jars. "We have people come in here and study all the time," Woodward says. "We're totally open to that."

However, Woodward emphasizes Porcellino is not a students-only establishment. He says many Porcellino customers come from neighboring south Eugene and the hospital. "We don't want it to be a campus bar, where it's blaring music," Woodward says, "and we didn't want it to be quick service, grab the food and just go."

While Porcellino has vegetarian options, The Italian Stallion Panini is for the meat lover only. Woodward and Verkler buy meats



CODY VERKLER AND EVAN WOODWARD

PHOTO BY TRASK BEDOORTH

from an importer of Italian foods in Portland, and their focaccia is specially made in Eugene at New Day Bakery, which doesn't make focaccia for anybody else, Woodward explains.

And The Italian Stallion lives up to its name — mixing exotic Italian cold cuts, capicola, mortadella, prosciutto, salami and pepperoni with fresh and flavorful greens and melted provolone. The panini is served with a fresh pepperoncini.

Although delicious, the size was intimidating even for this prodigious eater. Someone of a lighter appetite could split the panini at least twice. A Hop Venom IPA from Boneyard Beer washed it all down nicely.

In the warmer months, Woodward and Verkler plan to add gelato to their menu and expand the beer tap selection. In the fall, the partners will have Duck football games on the big screen. ■

Porcellino Bistro is open Monday through Saturday 11 am to 9 pm at 1290 Patterson St., 515-9890, wky.ws/1pj. Look out for expanded late-night hours coming soon.

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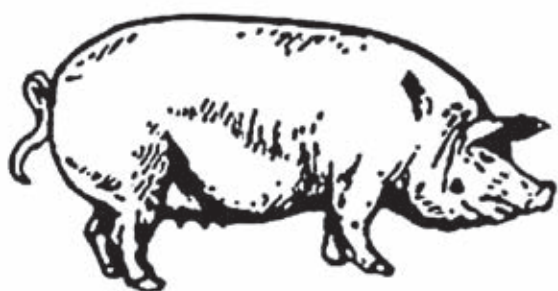
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