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# Popular seafood restaurant in Houston reopens – two years after Harvey

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Reef, an upscale seafood spot that closed in 2017 due to Hurricane Harvey flooding, has now fully reopened.

The restaurant at 2600 Travis St. in Midtown underwent significant repairs after floodwaters destroyed furniture and rotted the dining room, and chef and owner Bryan Caswell has spent the past two years wrestling with insurance, contractors and his personal life — his home was struck by lightning last summer — in order to reopen the space.

“Reopening was somewhat of an undertaking,” Caswell said.

The Caswells announced in mid-April that they would hold an April 14 pop-up event celebrating the impending reopening part of Reef. Eater Houston reported in late May that the restaurant would reopen for lunch service on May 31, the first time since Harvey. Now, the restaurant and its adjacent 3rd Bar lounge are fully open and operating regular hours. 3rd Bar had its hard opening June 1, while the main restaurant opened June 28.

Reef is still 9,000 square feet and still has 60 employees, who had to be retrained. The restaurant now has 145 seats in the dining room; 14 or 15 at the “Weedline,” a chef's table in front of the open kitchen; 60 at the bar; 30 on the patio; and 60 and 14 in the two private dining rooms. Total recapitalization was \$375,000, per Caswell.

The dining room has been redone to give the appearance of a Gulf sunset, with dark blue seats and gold lighting. The new tables, featuring a dark finish, were made by Caswell, his



SHAWN CHIPPENDALE

father and two of his employees. Caswell said he had wanted to make changes to Reef — regardless of the storm.

“We were able to put some things and change some things in the restaurant that a normal renovation probably wouldn’t have allowed,” Caswell said. “As painful as the storm was, ... that gave us the opportunity to make some changes that we never would have been able to.”

The menu has been completely overhauled. Now, a tasting menu is available at the “Weedline,” where Caswell says he can flex his fine dining muscles and mentor new cooks and chefs. New regular-menu dishes include the Crab Fat & Dough, a sort of bun with a crab cooked inside, the legs sticking out in what Caswell says looks like something out of a B-horror movie. It’s served with sabayon sauce and house-made pickles. Also on the menu is the Romanesco & Romesco, with roasted Romanesco — a type of alien-looking broccoli — and romesco, an Italian tomato sauce, along with pickled grapes, asiago cheese and granola.

3rd Bar is currently open Monday to Friday from 11 a.m. to 12 a.m., and Saturday from 5 p.m. to 12 a.m. The restaurant is open Monday to Friday from 11 a.m. to 10:30 p.m., and Saturday from 5 p.m. to 10:30 p.m.

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Reporter

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