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Pasquale Jones Opens From the Charlie Bird Team

By Leigh Nordstrom


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Margherita pizza with san marzano tomato, fior di latte and basil
George Chinsee

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Not even three years after the success that is New York SoHo's Charlie Bird, the team behind the modern Italian spot is expanding. Their new venture, a wood-oven anchored restaurant on Mulberry Street called Pasquale Jones — a name chosen simply for its fun — opens Tuesday to much anticipation. In the week before opening, the spot already played host to a number of private dinners, including one thrown by Jo Malone and Paul Andrew. But owners Grant Reynolds, Robert Bohr and Ryan Hardy didn't expand their lower Manhattan breadth to fulfill the wide-reaching demand from their clientele. Instead, the desire came from wanting to serve within.

"Mostly because we have a great young team," says Hardy, who is the executive chef (the chef of Pasquale Jones will be Tim Caspare), of the timing for restaurant two. "And in order to keep talent you want to create new challenges for them. When you have a lot of young talent you have the opportunity to provide challenges for them to grow into."

Reynolds echoes that statement. "We're at almost year three here at Charlie Bird and the opportunity came up to do something in a neighborhood that's close by and within walking distance and we have been lucky to have a lot of great people that we work with and it's good to give those people the opportunity to grow and do different things."

Charlie Bird is known for its wine selection and that will carry over to Pasquale Jones. "We don't have a specific approach — meaning that it's not an Italian focused list or a natural wine list," Reynolds says. "We kind of give ourselves the freedom to do whatever we want, but we try to make a wine list that isn't too big or too cluttered," which resulted in 150 or so selections.

When it comes to the food, the bulk of dishes are done in their wood ovens. "Yes, we love cooking pizza and cooking pizza is part of what we do at Pasquale Jones. But there are so many other things that a wood oven can do that I don't think are inherent to everyday type of cooking," Hardy says.

The menu starts with salads and vegetables, "little simple bright crispy things that get your palette jumping," says Hardy. "And then we move into pizza and pasta — dive in fully to the carbs!"

The selection is intentionally small and seasonally rotating. "We really love dried pasta a lot, we love to extoll the virtues of dried pasta," Hardy says. Currently the menu features spaghetti with anchovy and bergamot orange, sunchoke tortelloni with fonduta and brussels sprouts, and rigatoni done with sausage, nettles and oven-smoked ricotta.

The Pasquale Jones pizza will be a "long ferment on the pizza which creates a very light, easy-to-digest pizza dough," a technique the kitchen arrived at after trying many different methods. Their signature will be the Littleneck clam pizza, which already "we seem to sell on every table."

As fans of Charlie Bird know, music is hugely important to the team. "At Charlie Bird, we really took inspiration from what we call the golden era of hip-hop," Hardy says. "Robert and I were both born in 1974, so when we were teenagers it was really important music. We were listening to things that, at the time, were avant garde, that now are very classic New York music."

If Pasquale Jones is getting to the root of Italian cuisine, then so is its music selection. "The name alone had a little flair, a little buzz to it," Hardy says of the second restaurant. "And funk really came out of it — we took a step back and the roots of Italian food are pizza and simply roasted food, and funk really was the root of hip-hop."

The goal, like with the first go-around, is to do something difficult to capture. "A lot of people asked us what kind of restaurant Charlie Bird is, and the coined line we have is 'a delicious one,'" Hardy says. "Why does everything have to fall into a neat little box? Restaurants are a creative expression."

Pasquale Jones

86 Kenmare St

New York, NY 10012