Charleston Place buyer bringing Italian dining concept to downtown’s Broad Street

BY PARKER MILNER PMILNER@POSTANDCOURIER.COM

OCT 27, 2022

The view from outside the stretch of three Broad Street townhomes that will be home to Sorelle. Parker Milner/Staff

A prominent Charleston businessman’s hospitality group has tapped a renowned chef to help curate its first stand-alone restaurant concept.

Beemok Hospitality Collection, an affiliate of Beemok Capital, the family office of local businessman and philanthropist Ben Navarro, will open Sorelle in a stretch of three historic townhomes on Broad Street.
The expanding hospitality group is partnering with James Beard Award-winning chef Michael Mina of MINA Group, whose portfolio includes 40 restaurants in eight states, Washington, D.C., and Dubai.

Mina and MINA Group chef/partner Adam Sobel will both be in Charleston alongside Sorelle executive chef Nick Dugan for the restaurant’s opening in early 2023.

“This is three years in the making,” said Mina, who met Navarro through a mutual friend. “Charleston is a city that we always looked at.”

Sorelle’s name, which means sisters in Italian, is a nod to the 88 Broad St. space that was occupied in the late 1800s by a school run by two sisters. The multi-level structure will be transformed into a two-part dining concept: the first floor market, or alimentari, and second story dining room, highlighted by an open kitchen overlooking the downstairs area.

According to Beemok Hospitality Collection President Casey Lavin, the space “lends itself to this really bespoke and beautiful opportunity” to take people through a number of experiences, day and night. Meyer Davis Studio is leading the design efforts.

In the morning, patrons will be able to order pastries and coffee while perusing the market for gourmet items, such as Italian olive oil and flour. The morning menu will evolve into lunch, with salads, paninis and Sicilian pizza served near a downstairs bar offering wine, beer and cocktails. A downstairs wine cellar will house Sorelle’s wine and spirit collection, along with intimate private events.
Upstairs, Sorelle executive chef Nick Dugan will serve a variety of Southern Italian dishes made with Lowcountry ingredients. A handful of the spots inside the 100-seat dining room will be at the chef’s table and pizza counter, with housemade pasta, seafood and “modern interpretations of classic Italian fare” on the menu throughout.

“You can kind of build this experience in a couple of different ways,” said Dugan, who has worked at MINA Group restaurants in Washington, D.C., Seattle, San Francisco and most recently, Las Vegas at Bardot Brasserie in the ARIA Resort & Casino.

Patrons will be able to, for instance, grab a drink while snacking on small plates like warm Sicilian olives, crudos and meatballs made using Anson Mills polenta. Large plates will include three rotating pizzas, Italian mains and bowls of pasta, with the restaurant offering six different types at all times: two extruded in-house, two imported in Rome and two stuffed pastas.

Many of Sorelle’s ingredients will be sourced from a MINA Group partner’s farm in Sicily, Mina said.

The forthcoming restaurant is a big addition to Beemok Hospitality Collection, which made a splash in 2021 when it purchased Charleston Place, the peninsula’s largest hotel and an iconic property that played a critical role in making the city a prime tourist destination. Two months later, the group acquired a stake in The Cooper, a 225-room hotel project under construction next to Waterfront Park. Beemok Hospitality Collection’s assets also include The Riviera Theater in downtown Charleston, Credit One Stadium on Daniel Island and now, Sorelle.
“It’s been fun to watch Broad Street and Lower King and Lower East Bay kind of evolve,” Lavin said. “We think that this is going to further cement this part of town as a place where people want to go and spend their evening.”

While the restaurant is Beemok Hospitality Collection’s first foray into stand-alone restaurant ownership, dining concepts will be a central focus for the group as it looks ahead to the opening of The Cooper and renovations at Charleston Place in 2024.

With a “much larger focus on restaurants in Charleston Place” and five restaurants at The Cooper, Beemok Hospitality will soon have nearly a dozen restaurants in its portfolio, Lavin said.

The group will evaluate opportunities as they come, but there are no immediate plans to open or acquire any additional restaurants.

Reach Parker Milner at 843-830-3911. Follow him on Twitter @parkermilner_. Subscribe to CHS Menu newsletter.

Parker Milner is the Food Editor of The Post and Courier. He is a Boston College graduate and former professional hockey player who joined The Post and Courier after leading the Charleston City Paper’s food section.