

Sleepy Menlo Park is getting an influx of hit Bay Area restaurants like Che Fico and Burma Love

The sprawling Springline development just announced some of its food lineup, with lots of local heavy hitters

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A rendering of Springline, a splashy Menlo Park development that will house a lineup of top Bay Area restaurants. Provided by Presidio Bay Ventures

A star-studded lineup of Bay Area food-and-drink names, including San Francisco Italian favorite Che Fico and hit brewery Barebottle Brewing Co., are headed to Menlo Park as part of a splashy new development.

A total of eight restaurants and cafes will open at Springline, a 6.4-acre mixed-use development at 1300 El Camino Real that's been years in the making. Che Fico will open a new Italian restaurant and Italian market with its own butcher and gelato counter. San Francisco's Andytown Coffee Roasters and Burma Love, the sister restaurant of the beloved Burma Superstar, will also open outposts along the El Camino Real stretch of the development. The chef from popular Menlo Park restaurant Camper is bringing a new restaurant and wine bar to Springline called Canteen. Three additional restaurants have yet to be announced.

It's major news for Menlo Park, a quiet Peninsula town not known for its food scene. The developers behind the project decided early on they wanted Springline to be a dining hub and specifically targeted Bay Area businesses they thought would fill gaps in the area, said Cyrus Sanandaji, managing director of Presidio Bay Ventures. The San Francisco real estate investment firm [took over the massive development from Greenheart Land Co. in 2020](#).

"A project like this really ought to be a destination," Sanandaji said.

The restaurants will be open to the public, but they're also intended to draw people to live and work at Springline, like a mini city within a city. There are nearly 200 apartments with high-end amenities including a pool, pet spa and indoor golf simulator. Some of Springline's 200,000-square-foot office space has been claimed by tenants such as major Silicon Valley venture capital firm Menlo Ventures, trendy San Francisco co-working company Canopy and international law firm Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton.

Springline is also a short walk from the Menlo Park Caltrain station and close to Highway 101.



A rendering of the El Camino Real space where Che Fico's new Menlo Park restaurant will be located. Provided by Presidio Bay Ventures

The goal is to create "Sand Hill 2.0," said Sanandaji, a better and more convenient version of the iconic Menlo Park road filled with venture capital firms. Sand Hill Road is primarily occupied by office buildings, yet to have lunch or grab a coffee, employees and investors have to drive elsewhere.

"It's just not the same as being able to be in a true high-density, downtown-type of environment," Sanandaji said. "Even in downtown Palo Alto you're able to walk down University (Avenue) or other streets and have a variety of options. We needed to create that."

For restaurateurs, the Menlo Park project was appealing for several reasons. Chief among them, especially during the pandemic and in the Bay Area's intensely competitive real estate market: Presidio Bay Ventures is overseeing and funding the design and build-out of each restaurant space. A dedicated team is handling permit applications for owners.

Presidio Bay Ventures approached lease agreements as more of a long-term partnership than an adversarial relationship, owners said, though they declined to discuss specifics. This is allowing several San Francisco businesses to expand to the Peninsula for the first time.

"We feel like the Peninsula is a goldmine, honestly. It's just a hugely underserved market," said Barebottle co-founder Michael Seitz, who was also drawn in by the lineup of businesses opening at Springline.

The previous developer, Greenheart Land Co., broke ground on the mixed-use project in 2017, then called Station 1300. Presidio Bay Ventures had been in talks with them before the pandemic, Sanandaji said, and ended up taking over the development in 2020.

The restaurants will open throughout 2022. Read on for more on each project, listed alphabetically.

Andytown Coffee Roasters



Jon Macemore pours foam into a drink at Andytown Coffee's Salesforce Park cafe in S.F. in 2019. The coffee shop is expanding to Menlo Park. John Morry/The Chronicle 2019.

This will be Andytown's first cafe outside of San Francisco. Andytown roasts its own coffee beans and is known for its top-notch espresso drinks. The same menu will be served in Menlo Park, including Andytown's popular creation, the Snowy Plover — a shot of espresso mixed with bubbly soda water and topped with a dollop of fresh whipped cream. For food, Andytown also makes pastries, bread, jam and butter. Look for Irish soda bread served with that fresh butter and filling breakfast sandwiches on thick pan de mie bread. Owners Lauren Crabbe and Michael McCrory, both baristas, opened the first Andytown in the Outer Sunset in 2014 and now run three cafes.

Projected opening: late summer 2022

Barebottle Brewing Co.

Barebottle Brewing will bring a 3,600-square-foot taproom to Menlo Park, a city that has no brewery to visit. The Springline taproom will pour the same beers available at the original San Francisco Barebottle, which changes often but includes hazy IPAs, sours and pilsners. Barebottle's own natural wine and beer slushies will also be on the menu. As in San Francisco, this will be a family- and pet-friendly space with games and communal tables. Unique to Menlo Park, however, will be a retro beer van — a vintage 1964 truck from France that's been retrofitted to serve tap beers in a large outdoor plaza in the center of the development.

Seitz, who started Barebottle with co-owners and avid home brewers Lester Koga and Ben Sterling, knows Menlo Park well from his time as a Stanford University undergraduate. The social scene in the area, he said, "left something to be desired." That, paired with the loss of longtime local watering holes like the Oasis in Menlo Park and Antonio's Nut House in Palo Alto, made opening there seem like a fit for Barebottle. This will be the company's third location and second on the Peninsula, following a Santa Clara taproom that opened in 2020.

Projected opening: late summer 2022

Burma Love

When it opens, Burma Love will be Menlo Park's only Burmese restaurant. Run by the owners of San Francisco's famed Burma Superstar, spin-off Burma Love is known for the same tea leaf salad, curries and flaky platha that people line up for at the original. Owner Desmond Tan, who opened Burma Superstar almost 30 years ago, said this location will serve the restaurant's best hits, but also might adjust and add dishes based on customer feedback. Studio KDA, the architecture firm behind hit restaurants like Flour + Water Pizzeria in San Francisco and Comal in Berkeley, is designing the newest Burma Love.

Projected opening: fall 2022

Canteen



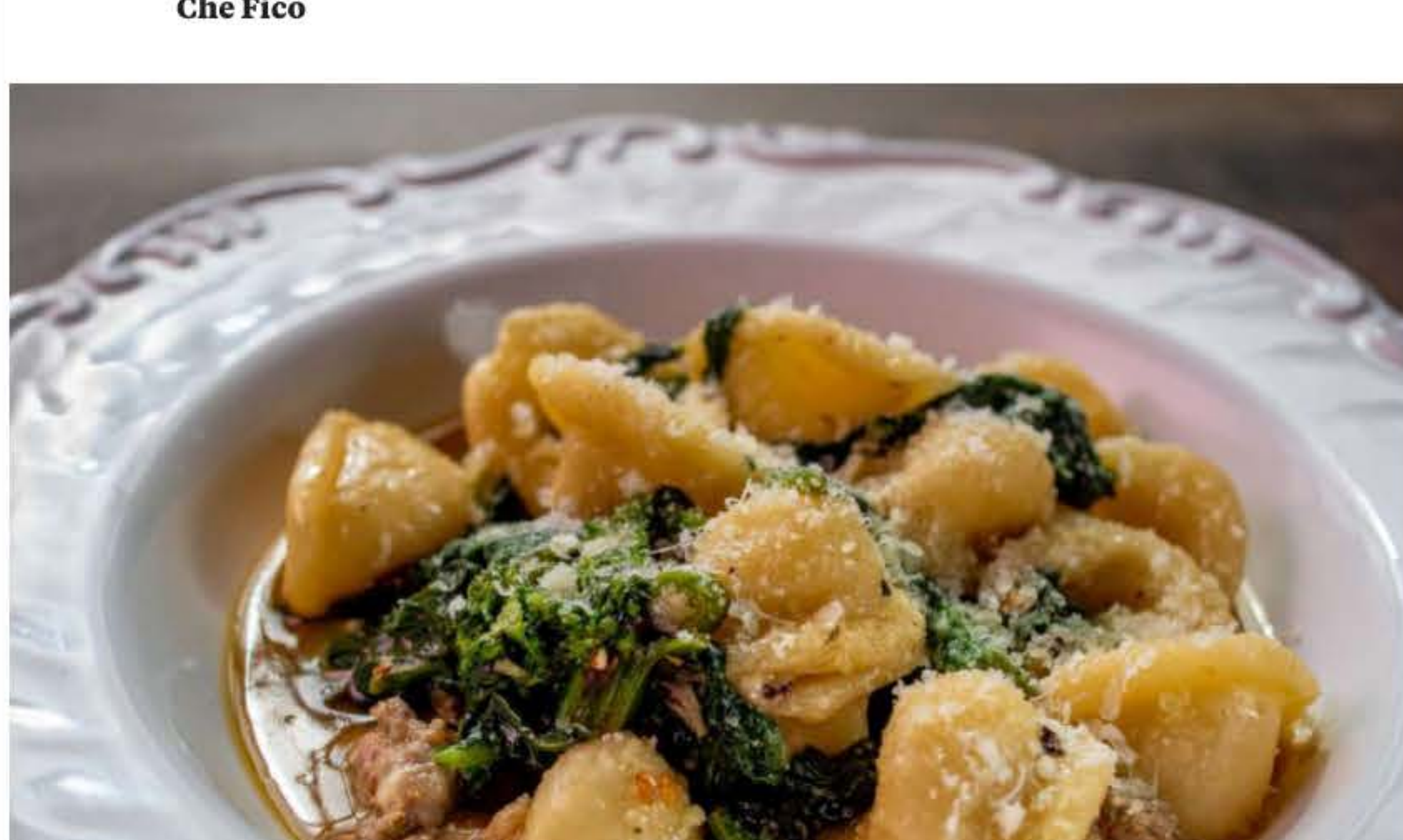
A rendering of the outdoor dining area at Canteen, the second restaurant from the team behind Menlo Park restaurant Camper. Provided by Presidio Bay Ventures

The second restaurant from Camper chef-owner Greg Kuzia-Carmel, Canteen will be a more casual, all-day affair that won't take reservations. It will operate two spaces at Springline: a cafe with Sightglass Coffee and grab-and-go food like sandwiches and salads on El Camino Real, and a separate restaurant and wine bar on Oak Grove Avenue. The restaurant, Canteen Next Door, will be geared toward dropping in for a bite and a glass of wine or a cocktail.

The menu will have "more of a grazing, wine bar mentality," Kuzia-Carmel said. Dishes aren't nailed down yet but think crispy chickpea panisse-fries with a seasonal dipping sauce, oysters and fresh uni. Drinks will include small California and international wine producers (including some natural wines), local beers and an "arsenal" of nonalcoholic options, he said. Kuzia-Carmel, a former Quince and Per Se chef, has drawn a following in Menlo Park for his seasonal California cooking and Camper's approachable, family-friendly vibe.

Projected opening: April/May

Che Fico



Orecchiette with fennel sausage and broccoli rabe at Che Fico in San Francisco in 2018. Che Fico's new Menlo Park restaurant will also serve fresh pasta. John Storey/The Chronicle 2018

Che Fico, which opened to much hype in San Francisco in 2018, is described as Springline's anchor tenant. The development will get the team's newest Italian restaurant, a to-be-named spot with plenty of outdoor seating. Chef and co-owner David Nayfeld said it will be a "casual, market-driven Italian restaurant" with the same fresh pasta and blistered pizzas that put Che Fico on the map. A significant portion of the 8,600-square-foot restaurant will be devoted to private dining; Nayfeld said Che Fico gets frequent requests to cater private events in the area. Jon de la Cruz, who designed the original Che Fico, is working on the Menlo Park restaurant.

Here's something Menlo Park will have that San Francisco doesn't: a Che Fico market with local produce selected by the restaurant's chefs, plus prepared foods, wines, meats and cheeses. A butcher counter will break down whole animals, and the store will sell seafood. Customers will also be able to buy Che Fico's own products, like a spicy Calabrian chile bomba sauce and pomodoro sauce, and get scoops or pints of fresh-spun gelato.

"It will definitely be Italian-leaning, but it will be a place where you're able to get all of your needs in one place: your produce, your meat, your fish, your groceries — and get a pack of diapers," Nayfeld said of the market.

Projected opening: late summer 2022