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New season, new tastes in Vail

There's a slew of new restaurants in Vail – here's an update

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VAIL, CO COLORADO,

Fire and ice. Two popular components of a great ski town (as well as a classic Robert Frost poem for those English majors out there), and the inspiration behind the names of two of the newest establishments in Vail. The restaurant inside the new Four Seasons is called Flame, which is fitting since the menu features a slew of beef, game and seafood options seared on such. Over at The Sebastian, the boutique hotel's new bar/lounge is dubbed Frost.

The sluggish economy hasn't kept new restaurants from springing up in Vail. Yama, a sushi restaurant on Gore Creek Drive, opened its doors a few months back. And in the next two weeks, the eateries inside Vail's newest hotels, the Four Seasons and The Sebastian, will open for business in time for the holidays. Here's a primer on Vail's newest restaurants.

Yama, 168 East Gore Creek Drive, Vail

The newest sushi joint in Vail proper is Yama, located across from the Sitzmark Lodge. Local real estate agent and 20-year Lodge at Vail veteran Charley Viola teamed up with two chefs, Chris Aycock and Ted Minami, to open the chic 40-seat eatery. The restaurant opened its doors the last week of September.

"We opened during off season so we could fine-tune everything and make sure we're offering the best product possible," Viola said. "Guests have been blown away by the food. I had high

expectations bringing (Minami and Aycock) in and they've exceeded my expectations."

Minami is a classically trained sushi chef who trained for 10 years in Japan and helped open Sato in Edwards. Aycock worked as a saucier for celebrity Hawaiian chef Roy Yamaguchi.

"I bring a lot of varied cuisines from around the South Pacific – Thai, Vietnamese, etc.," Aycock said. "Ted is more classic Japanese. We fused both of those together to come up with the menu."

While there's plenty of fresh fish swimming through the menu in the form of sushi rolls, sashimi and nigiri, there's also cooked-to-order dishes too.

"I knew the sushi would be phenomenal, but the hot food has been a pleasant surprise," Viola said.

“We have a seared albacore tuna with ginger udon broth, garnished with shitake mushrooms, kimchi and shiso (Japanese mint) and soba noodles that’s a really great dish.”

Call 970-476-7332 for reservations.

Flame Restaurant and Fireside Lounge, inside the Four Seasons, One Vail Road, Vail

The new Four Seasons Resort – and the two restaurants inside, Flame Restaurant and Fireside Lounge – opens to the public Dec. 11. This week, members of the media got a sneak peek inside the contemporary 121-room lodge, as well as a taste of some of Executive Chef Jason Harrison’s hearty food.

Harrison was most recently at The Bellagio in Las Vegas, and while the cold weather and the mountains are certainly new to him, his seasonal, slow-cooked food already fits right in. Think lobster mac n’ white-cheddar cheese with basil; eight-hour braised prime short rib with gorgonzola bread pudding; seared scallops with blackberries and parsnip puree; and trout tacos with jalapeno slaw. And did we mention the buffalo carpaccio “sushi” roll? We’re not sure if it’s set to be on the menu full time, but it ought to be.

In all, it’s tasty, filling fare for hungry skiers and boarders coming off the mountain.

Harrison is “looking forward to creating delicious, hearty food that will be perfect for the mountains, yet presented in innovative ways,” he said.

Flame is open for breakfast and dinner daily and Fireside Lounge is open from 8 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. each day. The restaurant has a private room, called “Out of Bounds,” in the back of the restaurant that seats up to 24 people. Entrees range from \$26 to \$39.

Visit www.fourseasons.com/vail or call 970-477-8600 for reservations. 8

Block 16, Market at the Sebastian and Frost Bar, all inside The Sebastian, 16 Vail Road, Vail

The swank Sebastian Hotel (formerly The Vail Plaza Hotel) in Vail, is home to two new restaurants and a cocktail bar. The hotel opened for business Nov. 22 and the restaurants and lounge are set to open Dec. 20.

The main eatery is called Block 16. Block is a viticulture term that refers to the best rows of grapes, while 16 is a reference to the hotel’s address.

“It’s very much a wine-inspired restaurant,” said Mike Oprish, general manager for the hotel. “The focal point of the room is a 1,000 bottle wine silo in the middle of the room, surrounded by seating. There will be around 350 wines on the list, including a custom Cabernet, called Block 16 – the property paired with Page Winery in Napa Valley to produce.

The property’s Executive Chef Sergio Howland, a Culinary Institute of America graduate originally from Mexico City, most recently ran a restaurant in Panama. Howland has been busy fine-tuning the menu, Oprish said.

“The food is very much a farm-to-table concept,” he said. “Very fresh, local and sustainable. It’ll basically be a Colorado twist on Napa cuisine. Entrees will range from \$25 to \$35. The restaurant will be open for dinner from 5:30 to 10:30 p.m. seven nights a week.

“His cuisine is fantastic,” Oprish said. “We’re really excited to have him. He does an incredible lamb shoulder, a really nice lobster salad, and a beautiful seared scallop dish.”

Located off the back lobby is the 76-seat lounge, Frost Bar.

“The concept is really just to be a high-energy, but luxurious-feel contemporary bar/lounge,” Oprish said. “We’ll have a lot of specialty cocktails, a great martini list. We’ll have what we’re calling the best scotch list in the mountains, with 25 to 28 selections. We’ll do something similar with tequilas too – we want to have a really interesting and eclectic tequila selection.”

The bar will host musicians nightly, both during the apres hours and later in the evening, Oprish said.

The hotel is also home to the casual Market, which will serve breakfast, lunch and dinner, as well as sell some grocery items and grab-and-go food items, like breakfast burritos, sandwiches and more. Market will be open from 7 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. daily.

Call 970-477-8000 to learn more.

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