

## Braconi's closes but newcomers to Naperville include Spartan Ale House, Freedom Brothers Pizzeria and X-Golf

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Spartan Ale House is expected to open in the former Tommy Nevin's Pub/Pete Miller's Steakhouse location near Route 59 and 103rd Street in mid-December. This will be the second Spartan location, the first being in Aurora. (Rafael Guerrero / Naperville Sun)

Braconi's Restaurant and Pizzeria has become another COVID-19 victim, but Naperville's new business scene is never without players hoping to find success in a town with a lot of dining, drinking and playing options.

Here are a few new businesses on the horizon:

## **SPARTAN ALE HOUSE**

Spartan House has found a home in Aurora for the last five years and now the owners are looking to put down roots in Naperville as well. They're taking over the old Tommy Nevin's Pub/Pete Miller's Steakhouse location at 3032 English Rows Avenue, which is near the intersection of Route 59 and 103rd Street.

Co-owner Ron Woerman said they hope to open Spartan Ale House in mid-December. The restaurant only requires some cosmetic changes, he said, because the building was in good shape despite being vacant since before the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

"The biggest thing that appealed to us was the location," Woerman said. "(Co-owner Michael Poulakidas) lives near the area, we're always driving by it and we were always interested in it."

Spartan House is part of a family-run operation in Aurora that also includes O'Malley's Pub and Eatery.

Woerman said the core menu will be the same as what they offer at Spartan House — pub fair like pizzas, flatbreads, burgers, salads, wraps, wings and sandwiches as well larger meals like grilled salmon, kabobs, pork chops and NY strip steak.



Freedom Brothers Pizzeria, which specializes in Neapolitan pizza using locally grown ingredients and baked in a wood-fired oven, is opening a second location on Naper Boulevard in Naperville. Their first location is on Route 59 in Plainfield. (Freedom Brothers / HANDOUT)

## **FREEDOM BROTHERS PIZZERIA AND ALEHOUSE**

This is another one where the owners have established themselves in a nearby town — in this case Plainfield — and now are taking a stab at Naperville.

A second Freedom Brothers Pizzeria and Alehouse is to open in the renovated Market Meadows shopping center at 1293 S. Naper Blvd. in January or February, restaurant owner Corey Svoboda said.

Their first location at 11914 South Route 59, just south of the Naperville/Plainfield border, opened more than four years ago. Svoboda said he and his brother, David, have been wanting set up a second shop, and more locations could be in their future.

“We’re excited. We’re still going to do the rock ‘n’ roll theme,” Svoboda said of a Naperville restaurant.

Freedom Brothers is known primarily for its Neapolitan pizzas baked in a wood-fired oven and a large selection of craft beer, whiskeys, wine and cocktails. Svoboda said the menu will be the same in Naperville as it is in Plainfield.

The restaurant name comes from the brothers’ last name — Svoboda translated from Slavic means “freedom.”



Braconi's Pizzeria in Naperville has closed after 16 years in business on Royal St. George Drive. The owners this summer wrote about their struggles in a letter posted on their storefront and Facebook page. (Rafael Guerrero / Naperville Sun)

## **BRACONI'S**

Braconi's Restaurant and Pizzeria was located at 796 Royal Saint George Drive for 16 years and struggled to keep going through all the COVID-19 restrictions, its owner said.

"Sorry we are closed permanently, thanks for the years of support," a note on its website said. In an Oct. 9 post on the Braconi's Facebook page, they wrote, "Missing all our family, friends, employees and customers."

Bill Paus, who co-owned the restaurant with wife, Vilma, said via email that they had hoped to sell the business but the deal fell through. They found they couldn't keep it going because business had declined and they couldn't find enough employees, he said.

The couple shared their problems this summer when they posted an online letter saying they were having a tough time, despite the state lifting its pandemic-related restrictions. They had to rely on family members to fill in for the help they could not hire and had reduced hours of operation.

"It has been nice to see many of you again as our community emerges from isolation," the letter said. "At Braconi's, we have made every effort to overcome the challenges of the pandemic and current labor shortage. Unfortunately, our efforts may not ultimately be successful."



Artist's rendering of a golf simulators available for use at X-Golf, which is opening a location in Naperville in December. (X-Golf / HANDOUT)

## **X-GOLF**

X-Golf, an entertainment venue featuring state-of-the-art indoor golf simulators, is opening at 790 Royal St. George Drive in December, near where Braconi's has closed, according to the venue's website.

The franchise business also offers virtual reality gaming, food and drinks, competitions, leagues, golf lessons, memberships, corporate outings and social events.

Naperville's Liquor Commission approved a Class M recreational liquor license for the business on Oct. 7.

In September, an X-Golf America news release said they had reached an agreement to open its 75th location, surpassing their original goal of 50 by the end of 2021. X-Golf venues are also open or will soon be open in Downers Grove, Glenview and Libertyville.

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