

Fine Dining 'Craft Park' opens on Gregory

■ Desserts are in full swing; brewing starts Monday.



RYAN DORGAN / NEWS&GUIDE

Josh Neiman, Debbie Chavez and Luce Maria prepare a flank steak for a wedding tasting event Monday at Fine Dining Restaurant Group's Craft Park on Gregory Lane. The two new 10,000-square-foot buildings will house the Roadhouse Production Brewery and The Refinery, a space for the company's catering operations and prep cooking space, among other uses.



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Employees of Roadhouse Pub and Eatery, formerly Q Roadhouse, gather to taste house brews Monday at the new Roadhouse Production Brewery along Gregory Lane. The new 30,000-barrel facility will take over the bulk of the company's brewing, though they will continue small batches at their 7,000-barrel facility in Wilson.

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By Jennifer Dorsey | 0 comments

Executive Pastry Chef Brad Horton and his crew made an average of 500 to 700 ice cream sandwiches a day last summer for Fine Dining Restaurant Group.

Keeping up was hard, especially on days when catering gigs raised that number to 1,500. The crew — he has six people working for him — operated in a tight space with an inadequate freezer.

That's changed. They still make all the ice cream sandwiches by hand, but now they have a roomy kitchen equipped with a machine to flatten 300 cookie dough balls an hour and a high-tech, temperature-controlled freezer that quickly freezes ice cream so it doesn't crystallize.

"Now we can backstock them," said Horton, opening a freezer door to show shelves of ice cream sandwiches packaged in containers labeled Cream and Sugar, the company's ice cream brand.

Making ice cream sandwiches is one of the Fine Dining activities now housed on Gregory Lane. Through a partnership with landlord Bland Hoke Sr. the company has two new buildings that add efficiencies and enable it to grow new lines of business.

"It's really hard to find space in town where you are able to build from the ground up," said Kendra Alessandro, Fine Dining's director of communications.

One of the 10,000-square-foot buildings, 1215 Gregory Lane, is Roadhouse Brewery, where beer will be brewed, bottled and packaged. Monday will be the first day of brewing there. The capacity is 30,000 barrels a year, but the brewery will start with 5,000 in the first year.

The other building, “The Refinery,” at 1225 Gregory Lane, will be home to the Bovine and Swine craft sausage business, Bistro Catering and Horton’s operations, which not only include Cream and Sugar ice cream but all other desserts for Fine Dining restaurants and catering.

Chefs will use The Refinery as a test kitchen, and there will be a tasting room for catering clients.

But food accounts for only 8,000 square feet of The Refinery. Artist Bland Hoke Jr. is using the other 2,000 as his studio. His sculptures mark the street entrance to the parking lot between the two new buildings.

“The whole thing is known as the Craft Park,” Alessandro said. “It’s an industrial park, but it’s a hub of creativity. It’s celebrating the art of craft.”

Fine Dining runs Rendezvous Bistro; Bin 22; The Kitchen; Il Villagio Osteria; Bodega; and Roadhouse Pub and Eatery, formerly Q Roadhouse. The Q’s name just changed to reflect the restaurant’s evolution from barbecue joint to gastropub, Alessandro said.

The Refinery will supply the restaurants with certain basics. For example, Alessandro said, it “will be a place to make things like stock and to cut up potatoes for french fries. The individual restaurants may do different things with those basics, but they all need them.”

The building also will be dessert central for Fine Dining. Horton had been making ice cream, ice cream sandwiches and desserts for all the restaurants, except Osteria, at Q Roadhouse.

Now all the sweets will be made at The Refinery. And, Horton said, “I can now take over most of the things the catering company does as far as dessert goes.”

With the new space, chefs like Horton and Bovine and Swine’s Joel Tate can pursue their passions as well as develop new businesses for Fine Dining.

Cream and Sugar and Bovine and Swine will start selling products beyond Fine Dining’s properties, Alessandro said. And Roadhouse will begin distributing bottled brews this summer in Wyoming, with Montana and Idaho to follow.

Beyond growing businesses and adding efficiencies, the new buildings enhance camaraderie.

“Working out at the Q felt a little isolated,” Horton said. “Now I have catering next door, and Joel Tate will be making sausages in the other part of the building.

“Just the fact that we have our team under one roof there is so amazing. It’s so nice to have that kind of camaraderie.”