



{food coloring}

EATS, DRINKS & SCOOPS

CULINARY DESTINATION

a taste of springline

words by SHARON MCDONNELL

{food coloring}



ABOVE: Springline's Burma Love is the newest location for San Francisco's Burma Superstar family of restaurants founded in 1992; Springline's plaza offers a new Peninsula gathering space.

A New York Times "36 Hours" travel story on Menlo Park could focus entirely on Springline, the new luxury mixed-use development across from Caltrain. Start the day with coffee and a pastry at **Andytown Coffee Roasters**. Eat lunch al fresco in the plaza by the fountain, perhaps a takeaway salad from **Proper Food** (seared lemon pepper tuna perhaps or green tea soba noodles with

sesame chicken, peanuts and mint). For dinner, pick your pleasure—Burmese at **Burma Love**, Spanish tapas at **Canteen**, omakase sushi at **Robin**, Italian at **Che Fico** or contemporary Mexican at **Mirame**. For late-night libations, head to **Barebottle Brewing**.

Just one more thing about the food and drink tenants at Springline: They're all based in San Francisco, with the exception of two. Canteen's sister eatery, Camper, is in Menlo Park; Mirame is in Beverly Hills.

That's deliberate. Cyrus Sanandaji, Springline's developer and the dynamic young managing principal of Presidio Bay Ventures, lives in San Francisco, has frequented all these restaurants and envisioned local brands that represent the City by the Bay's distinct cultural identity and iconic pull. "We looked to see what would complement existing fine dining options in the South Bay, and what didn't exist," he explains. "Instead of just heavy dinner places, we wanted quality, ap-

proachable outlets that would drive both locals and our tenants to want to eat and drink at Springline seven days a week."

There's nothing quite like Springline, a 183-unit low-rise luxury apartment complex new to the Peninsula. But that's just fine with the Oxford-educated Iranian-Kurdish American, who was born in Los Angeles, grew up in Dubai, studied political science at Oxford, worked in London and moved in 2008 to San Francisco. He embraces challenges, to put it mildly. "I have a passion for people and want to design an experience to evoke emotion—that's what makes life exciting. You spend 24 hours a day in a built environment so let's enhance the experience," says Cyrus, who admits to being an "adrenaline junkie." Among his favorite activities: windsurfing at Crissy Field and heliskiing.

Springline's abundant outdoor and communal indoor spaces (with a piano, library and record player in the sleek residential lobby) and robust amenities were shaped by the pandemic, he notes. "Pre-pandemic, restaurants didn't appreciate the value of outdoor dining.

{food coloring}



Now, it's a significant requirement."

Visitors are already clocking the differences between each restaurant's Menlo Park vs. San Francisco locations. Take **Burma Love**, whose SF sister restaurants are Burma Superstar (the first one opened way back in 1992) and Burma Love. "Our other locations have more traditional Burmese staples, like tea leaf salad, that the community has grown to love," says Bryanna Yip, director of brand for the Burma Love Food Group. "But Menlo Park also has inspired regional specialties like pork belly hung lay with tamarind sauce, heirloom tomatoes and pickled garlic." She adds that a "very large emphasis" on the bar program means cocktails with "more adventurous, curious flavor profiles," using ingredients like tea syrups, Thai basil, makrut lime leaves and smoked strawberries. Such flavors pair well with the bold, sour, spicy and salty flavors of Burmese food, which reflects influences from

nearby India, China, Thailand and Laos. The décor is trendier and more glamorous, featuring murals of Burma's golden stupas and pincushion-like lighting fixtures.

At **Robin**, chef/owner Adam Tortosa's omakase sushi restaurant where there's no menu, but a parade of 11 to 18 chef's choice dishes, features a full bar with Japanese whiskies—unlike his Hayes Valley location—and the menu is "about 20% different," including sashimi with charred pineapple and kabosu, a Japanese citrus that tastes of lemon, lime and yuzu combined. **The dark, dramatic décor features black volcanic-like walls with smashed copper leaf, and dining tables finished in shou sugi ban, a Japanese burned-wood technique. Distinctive hand-crafted serveware is adorned with crushed shells and rocks.**

Popular **Andytown** has five lo-

cations in San Francisco, all near Ocean Beach, except for one in a downtown high-rise. But, "We embraced a lot more color in this location and have some design features inspired by Spanish-style architecture in Menlo Park, like our wooden ceiling beams and arched niches where we sell coffee beans and coffeemakers," says Lauren Crabbe, who owns Andytown with her Irish-born husband, Michael McCrory.

The cafe pays homage to the Belfast neighborhood where Michael grew up: Anderson-town, nicknamed Andytown. "The Snowy Plover," Andytown's most famous drink, is an espresso cream soda concocted with brown sugar syrup, soda water and house-made whipped cream. Also on the menu: baked Irish soda bread, scones and sausage rolls.

In Italian slang, **Che Fico** means, "That's so cool." (Literally "What a fig.") That sums up chef/

ABOVE: Robin serves up a personalized omakase with an emphasis on sushi in a dramatic, elevated space.

{food coloring}



ABOVE (left to right): Che Fico dishes out handmade pastas, pizzas and seasonal Cal-Italian fare; at Andytown Coffee Roasters, a mural created by artist Orlie Kapitunik features a heron and snowy plovers, a small endangered seabird that nests in Menlo Park's salt flats.

co-owner David Nayfeld's delight in his trendy Italian restaurant's new branch. "Our space is larger, our wine cellar is three times the size, enabling us to dig deeper into reserve lists, and we have a room for private dining that can fit 70, or be divided. We also built a completely weatherized outdoor dining space." Specialties include sourdough pizzas—such as a pineapple, Calabrian chile and red onion offering that's a cult favorite—plus pastas, some Jewish-Italian specialties, as well as Manila clams and 'nduja butter baked in pizza dough. The nature-inspired décor in the colorful space features red leaf-shaped Murano chandeliers, vivid leafy wallpaper and myriad terra cotta-potted plants above the bar. Similar to its San Francisco locale, Italian grocery **Il Mercato di Che Fico** will also grace the premises.

For **Proper Food** owners and Stanford alumni Howard and Dana Bloom, opening a location in Springline is a return to their

roots. The pair met on campus and launched Proper Food in 2014, after struggling to find high-quality to-go food while working in San Francisco. Now a successful SF-based chef-driven chain, Proper Food's "fresh take on takeaway" menu includes seasonal sandwiches, salads, soups and entrees. Any food left over at the end of the day is donated to local food banks and charities.

Greg Kuzia-Carmel, the chef and owner of Menlo Park's already popular Camper, opened Canteen at Springline to showcase a small-plate menu inspired by his culinary experiences in the Basque region of Spain. With the goal of setting the "bar high for casual, but carefully executed dining," Canteen's cozy, welcoming space invites diners to settle in for conversation and bites. Doubling down, Greg is also the master-

{food coloring}



ABOVE: Canteen offers tapas-style small plates in an aquatic-inspired space; Barebottle Brewing was co-founded by three former business school classmates and friends who moved to the Bay Area and began homebrewing together.

mind behind Springline's Canteen Coffee, serving up beans from SF's Sight-glass Roasters.

For Barebottle Brewing, Menlo Park is like coming home, says co-founder Michael Seitz, who lives in Burlingame. "I graduated from Stanford and used to go to all these great places, now closed," he reminisces. After launching in San Francisco in 2016, Springline is Barebottle's fourth location—and the first on the Peninsula. "I always had in the back of my mind that I'd come back and open something," shares Michael. "From the start, dealing with Presidio Bay has been phenomenal. They're creating a vibe, doing what's necessary to attract the best of the best." 

dining destination

springline.com