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Empire Diner Aims to Recapture Glory Days With Contemporary Spin

Chef John DeLucie and restaurateur Stacy Pisone are counting on a real-estate boom to help the restaurant reclaim its legacy By **CHARLES PASSY** – April 23, 2017



Chef John DeLucie and restaurateur Stacy Pisone, both veterans of the New York City culinary scene, are behind the latest iteration of the 90-seat diner, which is set to open Monday.

They each bring considerable experience to the task. But the challenge of reviving Empire, which dates back to the '40s and became a hot spot in the '70s and '80s, is considerable, say dining-industry observers.

Part of the problem is that Empire is now competing in a neighborhood with an established dining scene — in contrast to a few decades ago.

Moreover, the concept of an “upscale” diner, the driving idea behind Empire in its glory days, is no longer so new or unusual. The city now has

several such establishments, notes Arlene Spiegel, a restaurant consultant based in New York.

In light of such obstacles, Ms. Spiegel said, the new ownership is “going to have to do a tremendous amount of marketing.”

Mr. DeLucie, who frequented Empire back in its heyday, says he believes he and Ms. Pisone will succeed where others have failed in large part because of the surging real-estate market in Chelsea and the surrounding area, including the Hudson Yards complex.

All those new residents will need somewhere to dine, Mr. DeLucie said, noting that curious locals have stopped by throughout the renovation to check on the status. ●