

## First Bite: Galileo III

By Tom Sietsema  
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After countless delays and more drama than you can find in an entire season of "True Blood," Galileo III finally opened Oct. 4. The long-awaited Italian restaurant is a nod to two earlier Washington dining rooms of the same name, both helmed by veteran chef Roberto Donna, 49.

It's impossible to write about the arrival of Galileo III, which Donna initially pegged for a spring 2009 launch, without mentioning the elephant in the room. That would be Donna's recent [headline-making run-ins](#) with Arlington County, for failing to pay meal taxes at his late Bebo Trattoria in Crystal City, and in the District, where he has faced lawsuits from former employees and investors. Food followers could be forgiven for thinking Donna wasn't ever going to pull off the project.



But here he is - a little rounder and a shade grayer than when we saw him last - tasting and directing and cooking in a new open kitchen that puts him back on stage for the first time since Bebo was shuttered last year.

"I'm persistent," the 1996 James Beard award winner says when asked about the skepticism surrounding the debut of Galileo III. His return, he says, is "like coming out of a black tunnel. I feel 25 again."

His dinner menu is two dozen dishes long and includes much that will be familiar to anyone who dined at the previous Galileo on 21st Street NW, which closed four years ago. On one hand, it's a treat to be reacquainted with Donna's pink round of pork sausage bedded on lentils, and tender stamp-size pasta stuffed with chicken, veal and pork and sauced with butter and fresh sage. Others might feel as though the distractions in his life kept him from coming up with fresher ideas.

Donna says that "people are going to ask for" his previous hits even if they're not listed on a piece of paper, so he might as well offer them. And to be fair, among his new seductions is a savory pudding with the texture of creme caramel. Flavored with Parmigiano-Reggiano, the custard is gilded with fresh burrata and porcini cream before serving. Like the salad showcasing tuna three ways (raw, smoked and as dried roe), the pudding disappears quickly, unlike the listless lamb and beef entrees that follow.

Diners pass a convivial bar before descending to a sunken, 80-seat dining room, warm in orange and brown. Donna says he asked his designer to "take out everything that makes you tense." Among the sunny appointments in the restaurant is Nancy Sabbagh, the chef's wife and roaming goodwill ambassador.

*600 14th St. NW. 202-783-0083. [galileorestaurant.com](http://galileorestaurant.com). Fixed-price dinners from \$55 (three courses) to \$89 (five courses).*

# The Washington Post

## G Street Food Downtown

Wednesday, October 7, 2009

Sometimes you just want a little inspiration at lunch. That's what you get at G Street Food, where on Monday the Vietnamese banh mi might call to you, while on Thursday you might choose a bratwurst with piquant kimchi.

G Street Food is the brainchild of Mark Furstenberg, who in previous culinary lives founded Marvelous Market and Breadline . Under his leadership, both shops answered Washingtonians' cravings, first for epicurean treats, then for homey soups and salads in the culinary wasteland that was downtown. Located just west of the White House, G Street Food does the same today for sophisticated palates in search of a lunchtime adventure.

The concept of G Street is to highlight street foods -- soups, salads, sausages, pizzas and pancakes -- from around the world. There are some standards: the banh mi, featuring roast pork and pickled vegetables on a chewy baguette; the pan bagnat, stuffed with a classic salade nicoise (both \$8.75); and a selection of salads, including a deliciously light combination of Indian lentil and eggplant (\$5.75).

The rest of the menu varies according to the day. So on Monday, the sausage option (\$8.50) is merguez with pickled vegetables; on Wednesday, it's chorizo, topped with

garlicky spinach and chickpeas, rolled in an Arabic flatbread called saj. The Tuesday tartine (\$8.75) is smoky eggplant with tomato and Parmesan cheese; Thursday is chicken with Roquefort cheese, grilled onions and greens. (Good news: Both options come with G Street's hand-cut, fried-to-order, perfectly salted fries.) For now, there's one pancake option, a socca, made of chickpea flour and topped with a thick stew of chickpeas, spicy harissa, yogurt and cilantro (\$5.75). Daily pancake variations will become available as the kitchen gains confidence with its already extensive menu, Furstenberg said.

It's a brilliant concept, with even better execution. Furstenberg has used his far-reaching food network to source top ingredients: for example, smoky bacon from Allan Benton, the legendary Tennessee smoker, that tops a deliciously balanced,

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crisp pizza along with sweet caramelized onions (\$5.25). The sausages come from Simply Sausage, an artisan producer in Landover. And the breads? All made by Furstenberg himself.

Which leaves you with one problem: What to eat? You could go back to your usual sandwich. But we wouldn't recommend it.

-- Jane Black

**G Street Food** 1706 G St. NW, 202-408-7474; <http://www.gstreetfood.com>. Hours: Mondays through Fridays, 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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