

GREEN SHEET
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Deer Park re-opens next year

Deer Park Tavern, a Santa Cruz County institution for the last 50 years and more, will reopen early next year.

The tavern closed on New Year's Eve, 1975, after it and the surrounding land was sold to the Carl N. Swenson Co. to become the site for the Deer Park shopping center.

Swenson subsequently sold the building and the land it sits upon to the Castagnola family in Santa Cruz.

The Castagnolas have leased the restaurant operation to Greg Dunn, the former manager of the Courtyard Restaurant in Soquel, and his partner Frank Capriotti, the Courtyard's owner.

Dunn, who will be the managing partner, said Tuesday he plans to reopen the restaurant early next year, after extensive remodeling.

"We are trying to capture the flavor of the old Deer Park Tavern," Dunn said.

"It will remain structurally the same, but everything else will be redone.

"There is a need for a good restaurant in this part of the county, especially for people from Watsonville.

"The menu will include steaks, roasts, chops, roast chicken, plus a few specialty items.

"We'll be able to have banquets for up to 125 people, but also smaller ones for anniversaries, birthdays and weddings."

The Castagnola family had originally planned to operate the restaurant, but decided to lease it out, said Ali Castagnola.

"There were a lot of people interested in leasing it, but we wanted to be assured that the person would have an appreciation for and would retain the traditions of Deer Park.

"There will be no other restaurant in the mid-county that will have the reputation of Deer Park," said Castagnola.

Dunn said he's now waiting for the architect to finish the working drawings for a new kitchen.

Part of the food preparation area and the cold storage boxes were demolished by Swenson when construction started on the shopping center.

"This will be one of the most modern, up-to-date kitchens," Dunn added. "We are adding 900 square feet to the kitchen."

Rosewall and Sons of Watsonville will be the general contractor for the project.

Dunn isn't sure yet what the opening date for the restaurant will be. A lot depends on when fixtures and furniture arrives.

When it does open, he said, there will be lunch and dinner served seven days a week, and entertainment.

"We know a lot of people have good memories about Deer Park. We will try to bring them back and update them," Dunn added.