

Madison Valley's Cafe Flora celebrates 20 years

Owner reflects on partnership with Bailey-Boushay

by James Whitely - SGN Staff Writer

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On Saturday, June 2, Cafe Flora will hold its 20th anniversary celebration. The restaurant, just outside Capitol Hill in the Madison Valley neighborhood, has maintained longtime connections with various LGBT service organizations, including the Bailey-Boushay House, which opened its doors the very same year as Cafe Flora, on the very same block.

The 20th anniversary event will be 'farmers' market style.' Cafe Flora's growers and vendors, some of which are regulars at the Broadway Farmers' Market, will set up shop throughout the restaurant as guests enjoy fine vegetarian food, cocktails, local wines and beers, and live music.

'We wanted to celebrate with [our customers], and with the people we buy our produce from and our coffee from,' Nat Stratton-Clarke, owner of Cafe Flora, told SGN.

'We did a fundraiser every year before they [Bailey-Boushay] outgrew us,' said Stratton-Clarke. It's clear he looks upon the restaurant's history with Bailey-Boushay with fondness and affection. Thus, for Stratton-Clarke, holding the 20th anniversary party as a fundraiser for the house was a chance to return to the restaurant's roots. All ticket proceeds from the event will benefit Bailey-Boushay House.

Stratton-Clarke, who has owned Cafe Flora for four years, was general manager for many years prior and said the ties to Bailey-Boushay were a 'selling point' for him when he was offered the restaurant.

'We're turning 20,' Stratton-Clarke said. 'It's a huge accomplishment.'

As Stratton-Clarke points out, there aren't many vegetarian restaurants that make it to 20 years - let alone many restaurants at all these days.

Unlike many vegetarian restaurants (and most vegan ones), Cafe Flora doesn't really serve 'fake meat.' From the time the restaurant was conceived of, it intended to put on its tables food from around the globe that just happened to be vegetarian.

Some staples, like the Oaxaca Tacos, have been on the menu since the restaurant opened its doors. Half of the menu usually consists of these standards, while the other half is seasonal or rotating items. Cafe Flora serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner as well as brunch on weekends.

'For us, using local ingredients & not only is it supporting the community, but it's better quality,' Stratton-Clarke said. 'I've been to the farms that we buy from. I want the guests to know that I vouch for these farms and I'm serving them the best food I can find.'

Cafe Flora's ties to the LGBT community don't end with Bailey-Boushay. The restaurant has typically been one of the largest fundraisers each year during Lifelong AIDS Alliance's Dining Out for Life campaign, and Stratton-Clarke serves as board president of Camp Ten Trees, a summer camp for LGBT youth and/or children of LGBT youth. Cafe Flora offers a Ten Trees Cocktail, pine-infused St. Germain with orange, in tribute to the camp.

If you've never been there before, the anniversary party will be a great introduction to Cafe Flora. For \$30, you get to not only sample some

quality vegetarian food, beers, and wines, but you will help an important charity as well. VIP admission, \$50, gets you access to special anniversary cocktails, early admission, and other goodies.

To buy tickets visit www.cafeflora.eventbrite.com. Cafe Flora is located at 2901 E. Madison St.

http://www.sgn.org/sgnnews40_22/page5.cfm