May 4, 2023

East Sacramento News

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University of Beer opens in East Sac

See Page 2

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University of Beer opens in East Sac

By Joe Perfecto

One of East Sacramento's newest businesses, University of Beer (UOB), recently made its debut.

Located at 5090 Folsom Blvd., this restaurant/bar/taproom is part of a chain that also opened six other locations. Beginning with its first site in Davis in 2012, UOB later opened locations in Folsom, Rocklin, Roseville, downtown Sacramento and Vacaville.

For many people in East Sacramento, it was a bit of a blow when the much-loved Cassidy's Family Restaurant, a no-frills, teetering-on-the-edge-of-greasy-spoon sort of place that was a neighborhood hangout for many years, closed at UOB's current Folsom Boulevard site on June 5, 2011.

During the following year, the upscale Les Baux bakery-cafe brought a new, light-dining experience and a bit of class to its little portion of this strip mall. But, alas, that too closed, in June 2016 – relocating to 945 Howe Ave. later that month. Next came Track 7 Brewing Company's The Other Side restaurant/taproom, a notable departure from its predecessors that provided a much-needed remedy to the dearth of craft brew spots in the area. But that too shuttered in late 2022, after closing its kitchen side a few months prior.



Photos by Joe Perfecto

The familiar facade of the old Cassidy's Family Restaurant and The Other Side restaurant/taproom sports new signage.

Jan. 1 marked not only the beginning of 2023, but of the next chapter for the space at 5090 Folsom Blvd., when work commenced on the new University of Beer location.

After some modifications and major redecorating, on March 22, a monthlong soft opening period commenced. The well-attended April 21 grand opening featured an East Sacramento Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting and one-time offers, including a Special Flight package of six beers, one each from Burning Barrel, Flatland, Moksa, Moonraker, Track 7 and Urban Roots breweries.

Changes to the interior of this Folsom Boulevard site are obvious to anyone familiar with its previous configuration and appearance.

Although the COVID-19-related outdoor seating area that occupied a portion of the parking lot is gone, the floor plan was altered to fit more tables inside.

The biggest change, though, is in the decor. The once perfectly serviceable, but unremarkable atmosphere, is now whimsical and welcoming.

Fantastical metal sculptures adorn the façade and dining area, such as a representation of the front end of a classic car, and a towering, vaguely humanoid creature that cannot be adequately described.

In an intimate lounge-like alcove, a "living wall" of greenery stretches to the ceiling high above. Potted plants abound and brickwork covers the formerly neutral and bare beige walls.

See BEER on page 3

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Cover by:
Joe Perfecto

Beer

Continued from page 2

Rows of flat-panel TVs run above the bar and kitchen, with more screens placed throughout the dining area and outdoor patio space. To call the transformation miraculous is not to overstate.

A full bar has been added, and as for suds, the taps – now 35 in number – dispense a wide range of craft brews, the particulars of which will change with time.

Devised by executive chef David Jacinto, the food menu – which includes starters, burgers, sandwiches, tacos, wraps, and fish and chips (the latter of which was described by one customer as "outstanding") – will be familiar to UOB patrons, as it is consistent across locations.

Both menu items and libations can also be enjoyed off-site, as this business offers party platters and full-service catering, as well as a rentable, mobile beer trailer, proffering a limited selection of brews and liquors.

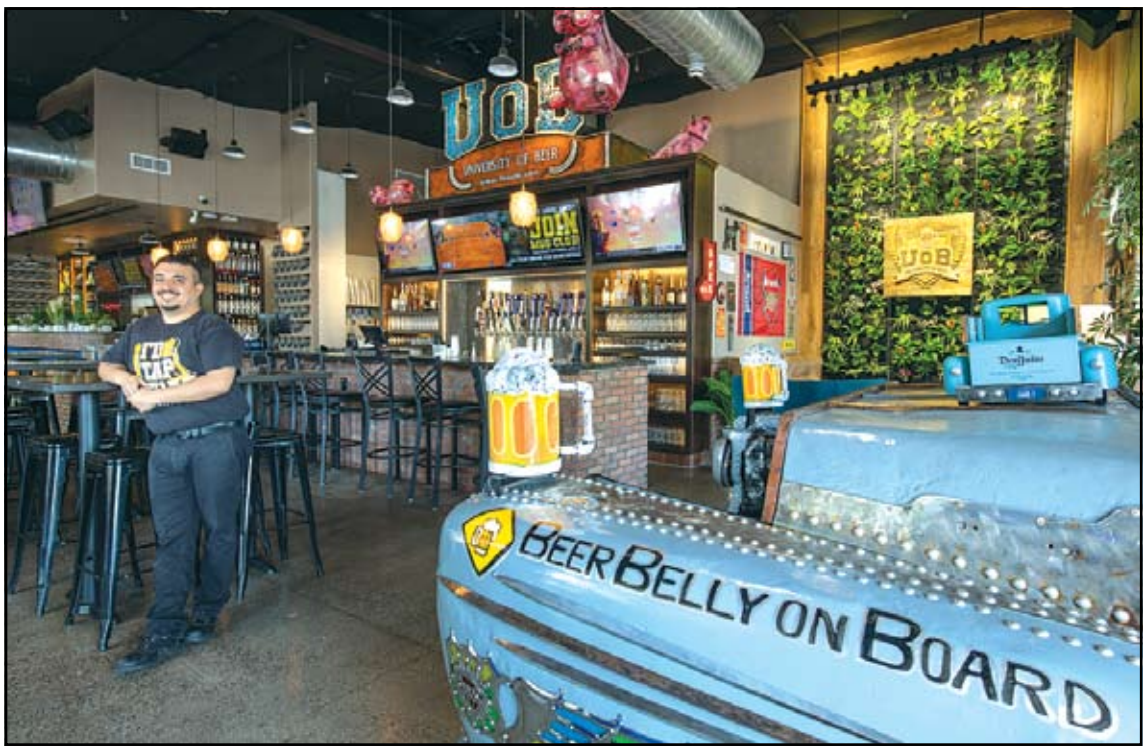
Worthy of note is that all bartenders, such as East Sacramento's Mike Barrera, are first-level Cicerone certified – meaning that they can answer practically any question about all the beers on tap, and then some. Not sure about what kind of beer would suit? Looking to pair a meal with just the right brew? Never had anything, but Bud and Coors? They've got you covered.

In addition to the staple happy hour on weekdays from 3 to 6 p.m., and trivia night every Wednesday at 8 p.m., UOB offers its Mug Club. The $100 initial fee entitles members to a weekly, $5 voucher that's good for seven days, a $3 beer night thrice per year, and a 50% discount on any four-beer flight year-round – plus, a 22-ounce mug, issued to each member, is used for all pours. A per-pint pour equates to six ounces on the house.

See BEER on page 4

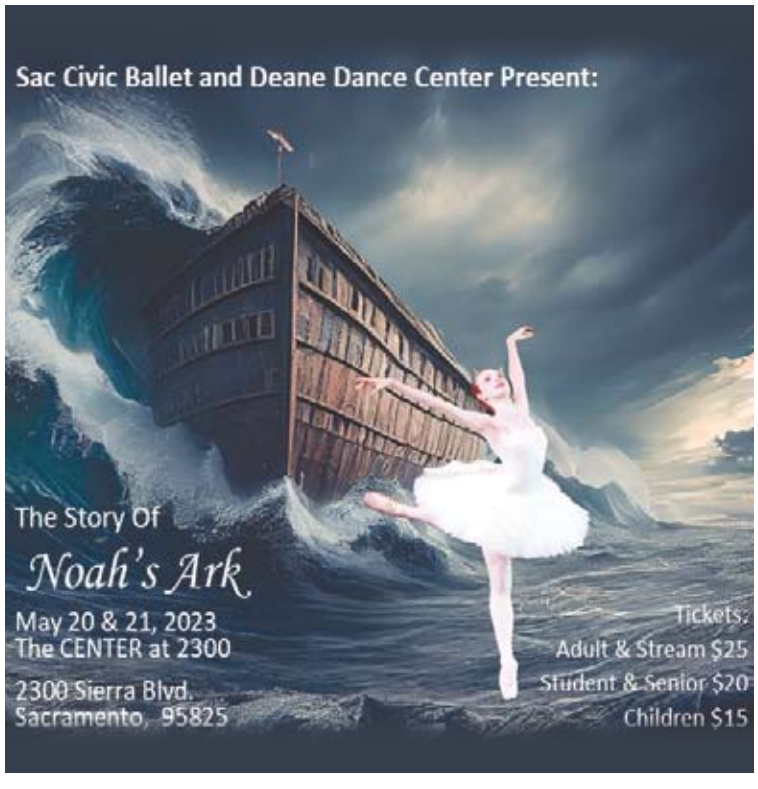


A custom sculpture greets patrons at the door from the patio. The kitchen is located behind the brick partition at right.



Bartender Mike Barrera waits to greet patrons near the main entrance area, which includes a sculpture of the front end of an automobile.







Beer

Continued from page 3

Limited-time specials will also be offered for occurrences such as Cinco de Mayo. Ongoing specials include Kids Eat Free, on Tuesdays, BOGO Shooter Thursday, and the daily First Responders' discount.

Then there's the Dogs Eat Free special. On weekends, when patrons seated in the patio order food, their canine companions will receive gratis a bowl of brown rice, peas, carrots and diced chicken, topped with an egg.

"We've always had dog-friendly patios, so it just makes sense to offer (dogs) a fun treat while their humans are having a good time," said Melissa Breck, who with her husband and UoB founder Nate Yungvanitsait owns the chain.

While some locations offer live music and karaoke, those offerings are not currently planned for the East Sacramento location.

UOB's acquisition of the Folsom Boulevard site, while well thought out, was as much happenstance as anything. The chain wasn't actively looking to open another site, but has always kept an eye out for opportunities.

The clear benefits of this property's location on a main thoroughfare with lots of foot traffic and close proximity to many businesses, CSUS and the enormous University of California, Davis Medical Center campus signaled that the time was right. But just as importantly, it seemed that University of Beer would be a good fit for the neighborhood, Breck explained.

"We like to grow organically in a location (where) we can flourish within the community, rather than try to force our concept in a place that may or may not work for us," she said. "So many factors go into our decision when we are

See BEER on page 5



A cozy, lounge-like alcove showcases a "living wall" of greenery at the new location of University of Beer.

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Even the patio space at East Sacramento's University of Beer features flat-screen TVs.

Beer

Continued from page 3

looking at a space, but it just has to feel right for us."

The concept of a good fit is an important one for University of Beer, as each location has its own vibe.

The postage-stamp-sized Davis location, being in a college town, has a bit of an "Animal House" lean, and at the Roseville location, just across from the massive, Eureka Road Kaiser Permanente complex, the by-and-large professional clientele make for a more subdued atmosphere.

At the voluminous, janky downtown Sacramento site, the eclectic, energetic crowd produces an often hectic, spirited scene. In contrast, the mid-sized East Sacramento location is situated in a heavily residential area with some mixed zoning sprinkled in, which takes the venue back to its neighborhood-hangout roots, and imparts a toned-down, laid-back air.

In a span of just six weeks, the venue has integrated well with the neighborhood. Many of the patrons are local residents, both young and old, and many of them families, and a number of staff members also live nearby.

"The East Sac community has welcomed us with open arms," Breck said.

While Mondays and Tuesdays are slow at present, attendance tends to increase as the weekend nears, and going into the warmer months, daily capacity crowds are likely. So, getting there early is a good strategy.

University of Beer is open Sundays through Thursdays from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., and Fridays and Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m., but the kitchen closes at 10 p.m. on those days.

For more details about the UOB chain, visit the website, www.theUOB.com, or call the East Sacramento location at (916) 306-5577.



The floor plan of the main dining/bar area was modified to improve flow.



Patrons entering from the rear patio door get a view of the kitchen-side dining area.

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Sunday May 7, 2023
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Photos courtesy of Dr. Martin

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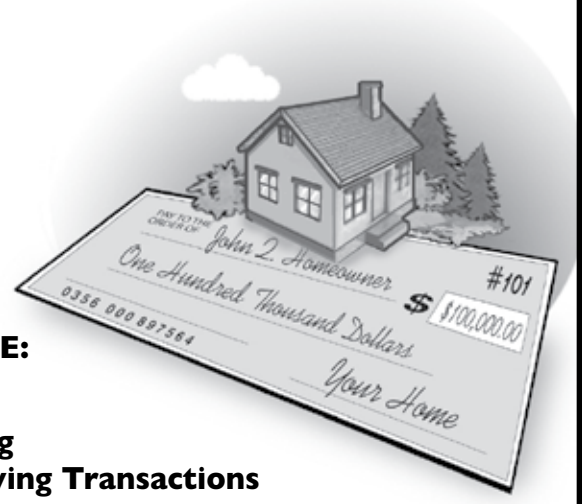
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