

## restaurant openings

### NORTH MICHIGAN VENUE IS TRUE TO ITS NAME

Epoch Restaurant Group unveiled its second Knot Just A Bar in July along Omena Bay in Northern Michigan, about 90 miles from the flagship venue in Bay Harbor. Boasting nearly 70 beers (\$4 to \$5 on draft, \$1 to \$17 in cans or bottles) and a menu of sandwiches, pastas, seafood and meat dishes (sandwiches start at \$7.95, entrées range from \$12.95 to \$21.95), the waterfront venue lives up to its nautical name—it's not a



The second Knot Just A Bar in Northern Michigan has views of Omena Bay.

typical bar. While the casual atmosphere attracts laid-back diners, Knot Just A Bar is known for its beer club, which immortalizes guests who sample every beer, adding their names to a display. The restaurant carries local brews like New Holland Mad Hatter and Whaleback White, along with microbrews, international ales and big-name domestics. Knot Just A Bar also has select cocktails (\$4 to \$9) and a wine list that includes 28 glass pours (\$5 to \$12) and 35 bottle offerings (\$20 to \$48), highlighting local Leelanau County wines.

### SPRUCING UP SAN FRANCISCO'S PRESIDIO HEIGHTS AREA

San Francisco's Bacchus Management Group takes pride in creating distinct restaurant concepts, and its newest venture, Spruce, definitely fits the bill. The local company's latest offering opened this spring with the goal of providing a welcoming gathering spot for the Bay Area's Presidio Heights neighborhood. At 5,000 square feet, Spruce combines elements of an upscale restaurant, a take-out café, and a bar and lounge. Executive chef Mark Sullivan prepares contemporary American fare (entrées range from \$26 to \$36), while wine and spirits director Andrew Green has crafted an awe-inspiring beverage program. Spruce's wine list, which has a special focus on



San Francisco's Spruce serves contemporary American fare and boasts a wine program that includes more than 1,000 labels, with an emphasis on German Rieslings.

German Rieslings, boasts more than 1,000 selections (\$8 to \$38 a glass, \$16 to \$200 a half-bottle, \$19 to \$4,483 a full bottle for the 1990 Domaine de la Romanée-Conti La Tache). The restaurant also has more than 250 spirits (\$5 to \$240 a 2-ounce pour), roughly 15 specialty cocktails (\$8)—including the Bee's Knees, made with Sarticious gin, lemon juice and honey water—and nearly 25 beers (\$5 to \$6 on draft, \$4 to \$24 a bottle). Named for its location at the corner of Spruce and Sacramento streets, Bacchus Management Group hopes the San Francisco locals who live near Spruce embrace it as their go-to restaurant for all occasions.

**mw**

Laura Pelner

## Commander's Palace rules Florida....Mediterranean in Missouri....Bringing Italy to NYC....

The iconic New Orleans restaurant Commander's Palace has plans to open a venue in Destin, Florida. The Creole and American-inspired restaurant, tentatively set to debut next summer, will be located at HarborWalk Village.

❖ James Beard Award-winning chef Michael Smith opened an eponymous restaurant in downtown Kansas City, Missouri, in July. Featuring American fare with Mediterranean influences, the 72-seat venue has a 170-bottle wine list and offers seasonal cocktails made with fresh fruits and homemade juices. ❖ Bronx, New York-born Anthony Mazzola moved from retailer to restaurateur with the August opening of his

Accademia di Vino in Manhattan's Upper East Side neighborhood. The 160-seat restaurant aims to educate its guests and concentrates primarily on Italian wines, offering more than 500 selections. ❖ Tracht's, named for chef and owner Suzanne Tracht, opened in July in California's Renaissance Long Beach Hotel with a menu of steaks, roasts and braised foods, and a wine cellar stocked with 1,100 bottles. ❖ Thai Select premiered in Manhattan in July. Operated by Thai natives who run three successful restaurants nearby, Thai Select has a beverage program that includes several sake-based cocktails.

**mw**

—L.P.