

## 'Pop-up restaurant' treats Holyoke diners to Boston cooking

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They can be found in Boston, New York, San Francisco and other major cities around the country. Now, Holyoke is going to have one of its own.

It's the phenomenon known as pop-up restaurants, and Holyoke's first-ever will be held on Friday and Saturday. (The first night is already sold out with few tickets remaining for Saturday).

Billed as "Deposit: Pop-Up Dining & Art Experience," the unique, fun experience is the brainchild of tech entrepreneur and designer Brendan Ciecko, a former resident of Holyoke who remains bullish on the Paper City he once called home. Ciecko is founder of a creative agency that designs and builds web and marketing tools for musicians and the entertainment industry.



A taste-tempting dish prepared by Whisk of Boston.

"The fact that we sold so many tickets in just three or four days through social media is a jaw-dropping realization that people in the region, people in Holyoke, are really excited about different things that go on all the time in places like Boston and New York City," "I've been wanting to put a pop-up together in Holyoke forever. When I heard about the Jerome Liebling photography exhibit and Ken Burns' appearance at its opening this week, I knew this would be the most opportune weekend to hold one. With people being already energized about the art events taking place throughout the city, I wanted to put together an event that would further inspire people and fulfill a need in the city where there is no dining culture in the downtown," he added.

Pop-ups, mostly restaurants or retail outlets which began to gain prominence in the early 2000s, are temporary installations usually open a few days on the weekend or sometimes as long as a week in vacant storefronts, old factory buildings or other out-of-the-ordinary locations, noted Ciecko.

"For instance, during New York Fashion Week, you can usually find different brands opening pop-up stores. And, when it comes to restaurants, they tend to be more experimental than a usual two- or three-course sit-down meal. Chefs like them because they can be more innovative and take more risks," Ciecko said.

Ciecko selected the 1920's banking hall of the Hadley Falls Trust building located at 56 Suffolk St. as the site of this weekend's pop-up.

"This phenomenally beautiful space offers a sense of history to Holyoke. The building has incredible detail inside ... gorgeous chandeliers ... gold-leaf rosettes in the plaster work ... marble ... it's a true architectural gem and a landmark building," Ciecko said.

He said guests can expect an interactive dining experience, noting they have replaced the bank tellers with chefs, and after patrons hand over their "deposit slip," they will be presented with their tasty dish.

The taste-tempting dishes will be prepared by Whisk of Boston, featuring executive chef Jeremy Kean and executive pastry chef Philip Kruta, whose resumes include Boston's L'Espalier, Rialto, and No. 9 Park restaurants, and now spend most of their time dreaming up new pop-up ideas.

"I met them at one of their events and started to talk to them about my idea for Holyoke, and they seemed very excited about the challenge of doing something outside Boston and utilizing a gorgeous space in Holyoke. Western Massachusetts is known throughout the country for growing incredible produce and many chefs in New York and Boston use produce from the area. Both Whisk chefs are still developing the menu which they will finalize just a few days before our event, so that they will be working with the freshest local ingredients. They have already been in touch with a number of farms in the Pioneer Valley to see what is available," Ciecko said.

Already known for the menu, however, is pork belly confit – ice wine apple butter, apple chips and pistachio microwave cake – balsamic straw berries, licorice cream.

Ciecko said they have also added a special celebrity guest chef to the lineup - Chef Isadora Sarto. She has appeared on Chopped and Extreme Chef on Food Network. Her résumé includes NYC's Ritz-Carlton, Cafe Boulud and Boston's Clink and Tremont 647. Sarto will be preparing turnip gratin – ricotta salata and lemon cress.

But, this weekend's event is about more than enjoying some creative cuisine served up in style, it's also about art, music, and film all tied up with a special philanthropic bent.

The event will also feature art by Amy Johnquest and Rob Kimmel, music by Elizabeth Dobrska, and film from the early days of cinema.

According to Ciecko, guests at this weekend's pop-up will participate in "crowd-sourced philanthropy." Patrons will vote for their favorite non-profit on each deposit slip – including Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society, Food Bank of Western MA, Girls Inc. of Holyoke, Greater Holyoke YMCA, Massachusetts International Festival of the Arts, and Nuestras Raíces – with a portion of the proceeds from the event being distributed among the charities based on popular vote.

Ciecko, who was born in Holyoke and lived in Western Massachusetts for quite some time, now lives in Boston. His fiancée's parents live in Holyoke.

"I have been involved in a number of projects pertinent to the revitalization of the city. I see Holyoke as being this experimental playground for new ideas. Holyoke is more exciting than ever and you can see this by the many art events and themes that have been growing throughout the city," Ciecko said. "Even though I'm away from the city, I always find myself thinking about things that would be great to bring to Holyoke...the city itself is a muse, a source of inspiration," he added.

As for this weekend's pop-up dining experience, Ciecko said he hopes area chefs and those beyond will take notice of the event.

"What I hope is that they realize and see the possibilities for opening a restaurant in downtown Holyoke, just as they would for Hartford, Boston or Northampton," Ciecko said.

Tickets – available at <http://deposit-holyoke-popup.eventbrite.com/> - are \$80 and include seven tastings and a specialty beverage, or \$65 for five tastings.

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