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PRESS RELEASE

DESPITE PANDEMIC, ANTICIPATED NEW RESTAURANT OPENS IN DOVER FOXCROFT

Chew 62 Grand Opening & Ribbon Cutting Ceremony on January 5th

Dover-Foxcroft: On Dec 21st, Dover-Foxcroft's newest restaurant, Chew 62, held a soft-opening for dinner *by reservation only*. Several days earlier when the soft opening date was announced on Facebook, it was followed by a multitude of page shares, comments, and likes. Community members shared their excitement and reservations began pouring in. The restaurant, previously known as the Nor'Easter, was completely redesigned to create a casual dining experience with the feel of a fine-dining restaurant. The owner, Tejai Lee, wants the space to be comfortable for families with children while providing a perfect date-night spot for couples.

Chew 62's mission is to be recognized as a family-friendly, community-driven restaurant prioritizing unmatched customer service through ongoing employee development, and fresh, delicious food made with 'love in every bite'. Menu items include locally-sourced (when possible) fresh food, made to order, not pre-processed or previously frozen. Customers can expect a modern twist on classic, home-style food, with culturally diverse specials and a fun children's menu. Hours of operation are from 4pm to 8pm daily through Grand Opening day on January 5th (closed on Dec 24th and 25th). Starting January 6th, Chew 62 will be open from 11am to 8:30pm, every day.

The name, "Chew 62", was inspired by a Bible verse from Galatians, chapter 6, verse 2, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Tejai, a young entrepreneur and talented chef, is moved by this verse because he is passionate about people. "You can get food anywhere. This isn't just about the food for me, it's about the people, it's about community", he said.

When asked when he first knew he wanted to be a chef, he said, "I was 12. My grandmother saw I wanted to learn, and she taught me how to cook basic meals for myself and how to follow recipes. From there, I went into the restaurant/hospitality business, and though I loved to cook, I didn't like the environment." Even while in his teens, Tejai became increasingly disheartened by the shortfalls in the restaurant industry, in part with the quality of the food being served, but more specifically concerning the workplace, as he continually saw employees being underappreciated for their contributions to the success of a restaurant. He knew that if given the chance, he would change that.

"When I was 17, I worked with a chef that truly helped shape me," said Lee, "He was super level-headed and extremely patient; I worked with him for five years and never once saw him get mad. He would gently correct me when I did something wrong - was always encouraging me... I never wanted to disappoint him. He created a standard I wanted to emulate. He was wise."

Tejai, who has been supporting himself since the age of 15, saved nearly every dollar he earned, which he ultimately invested in the purchase, renovation, and start-up of Chew 62. "He had his eye on the prize, he kept his focus on the dream - and he worked hard to get it", said Denise Buzzelli, chamber director, "but he realizes the investments others have made in his life along the way to get him here."

For his middle school coach, for a good friend at a group home, for his Judo Sensei, and countless others who gave him insight regarding his strengths and weaknesses and who taught him about life – he is thankful. And more recently, when asked who in his life has been instrumental in the opening of Chew 62, he finds it hard to verbalize how thankful he is for all the support, guidance, and help he has received.

“First, I really want to thank Seth Ostrosky, (previous owner, Nor’Easter) who believed in my vision and worked with me on the sale price, making the purchase possible, then working with me to help me better understand the dynamics of owning a restaurant in Dover-Foxcroft”.

The restaurant’s renovations and upgrades included new flooring, lighting, painting, new furniture and seating, some new equipment, a new P.O.S. system, and heat pumps, which Tejai purchased locally. “I am so thankful to members of the community for their excitement and for welcoming me with open arms. Gregg Buzzelli at Dave’s World has helped me tremendously at every turn, and the team there is amazing. Alyssa at Webber Ace Hardware for her help and knowledge, Engstrom & Tumosa for the use of their bucket lift to hang my sign, Chris Bragan for picking up all the scrap metal after the renovations, John McKusick for having the beautiful plant delivered on opening day, and Will Wedge, for never being too busy to chat with me,” he said, “..so many others who did little things to help, I couldn’t possibly name them all.”

Tejai also spoke of two close friends in the restaurant business, Eric and Victor Guzman, owners of Las Palapas Restaurant(s.) “These guys have been awesome and so supportive, I appreciate them more than I can express”, he said. Finally, Tejai credits the creativity of his girlfriend, Rosie, for the restaurant’s new aesthetics and redesign, including the Chew 62 color scheme, logo, and branding. “She has kept my head level through the whole process with her constant support and encouragement; through each challenge, she motivated me to continue striving toward the ultimate goal.” He continued, “One of the most powerful aspects of our relationship is that she always calls me out when I lose focus or stray off course so that I can make the adjustments needed for success.”

The Chew 62 Grand Opening will take place on Tuesday, January 5th from 12pm-2pm with a ribbon-cutting at 1pm. The event is open to chamber members *and* community members. RSVP is not required but appreciated by calling the chamber at 207-564-7533 or responding to the announcement on the Chamber’s Facebook page. Current CDC restrictions apply. Masks and social distancing, please.

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