



Nine Elm American Bistro to fill Grappa's spot

By Ethan Forman
Staff writer

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DANVERS — A young Danvers couple plan to fill a void in Danvers Square created by the closing of an Italian eatery by serving up a restaurant of their own in the same spot.

Matthew and Jean Sanidas plan to open Nine Elm American Bistro in the first week of September if they get approval tonight from selectmen for the transfer of a beer, wine and cordials common victualler's license.

Grappa's Italian Cuisine and Seafood plans to close at 9 Elm St. at the end of next month and transfer the license to the couple. The new full-service restaurant would seat 44 customers, 36 at tables and eight at the bar.

"I think this is going to hit the ground running," said Matthew Sanidas, a chef who is opening up his first restaurant.

Jean Sanidas said she will not be in the kitchen, but plans to work at the "front of the house" on the business side of things. She has a degree in business management from Salem State College and plans to continue working at a company called Gotuit, a small software company in Woburn.

"It's always been his dream to open a restaurant," Jean said. The couple, high school sweethearts and 1994 graduates of Danvers High, also have an 18-month-old daughter to look after.

The couple have an agreement to purchase Grappa's from the DiMercurios for \$93,000, with \$50,000 of that paying for the alcohol license, according to the license application.

The rest of the money would pay for equipment and furniture. The purchase-and-sale and lease agreements hinge on the transfer of the license.

Matthew Sanidas, 32, works as a chef for a food-service company, the Compass Group, according to the application.

Local diners may have feasted on his cuisine at the former Cuvee Restaurant in Salem, where he worked as a sous-chef and executive chef. He also has worked as chef de cuisine at Cassis Bistro Francais, a French restaurant in Andover. He went to culinary school at Essex Aggie and Salem State College.

The couple plan to freshen up the look of the restaurant with new colors and artwork. A new chalkboard

will list specials and fresh seafood.

Meals will be in the \$18 to \$24 range, and they will consist of will be what Sanidas calls "creative American cuisine."

Matthew Sanidas said the restaurant will emphasize seafood, and the menu may feature a grilled salmon with toasted basmati rice or a sauteed spinach with a green apple curry beurre blanc (a hot butter) sauce. The restaurant will also feature a basil-marinated New York strip steak.

Grappa's plans to close Aug. 27 after 21/2 years in Danvers, its owner, Tony DiMercurio, said. He owns Grappa's with his wife, Lisa, and the family has been struggling to keep two restaurants open while his wife tends to her ailing mother.

They plan to focus on the restaurant they run in the Magnolia section of Gloucester.

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In September, Matthew and Jean Sanidas of Danvers plan to open Nine Elm American Bistro in the present home of Grappa's Italian Cuisine and Seafood at 9 Elm St. This is the young Danvers couple's first restaurant. The Sanidases are seeking the transfer of the beer, wine and cordials license at tonight's Danvers Board of Selectmen meeting. Standing in the background is Grappa's waitress and bartender Jeannie Cappiello of Lynn. Staff photo