

TABLE TALK

Jesse Morreale Returns to the Restaurant Scene

BY

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Jesse Morreale makes a comeback. —Photo by John Johnston

It's been nearly three years since the very public battle between **Jesse Morreale** and the city that resulted in the closure of **El Diablo** and **Sketch Wine Bar**. Since that time, Morreale has largely faded from public view. Now he's back—and in a big way.

Today, **Morreale** and **Larimer Associates / City Street Investors** announce a new restaurant partnership in northwest Denver.

The details are thin but we do know this: The casual eatery, which is slated to open mid-to late-September, sits on the border of Highland and Sunnyside on a major traffic corridor. A location such as this—a place where people drive through but don't necessarily stop—is a sweet spot for Morreale. He's drawn to challenging venues, and at one time co-owned **Mezcal** and **RockBar** on Colfax Avenue and **El Diablo** and **Sketch** on Broadway. "Traffic corridors are hard for destination places like restaurants," Morreale says. "You've got to raise the profile of the area you're in, make it feel more welcoming, and make people associate driving there with stopping rather than just passing through."

This idea of community-building, especially in transitional areas, is a hallmark of Larimer Associates / CSI as well. And, in fact, this likeminded partnership is a decade in the making for Morreale and **Joe Vostrejs**, principal at Larimer Associates / CSI. "We wanted an edgy concept designed from the ground up to specifically serve the demographic and location, and Jesse is the perfect partner to make this vision a reality," Vostrejs says.

The intention is to create a gathering spot that appeals to both Highland and Sunnyside. "[The neighborhoods] are vastly different places despite being separated by one street," Morreale says. "You've got to take that into consideration in thematic design and concepting." As such, the restaurant will be casual and multipurpose: it'll serve as a place for a bite, for watching the game or grabbing a beer, for stopping off for a cocktail on the way to or from downtown. It'll also be open late, another Morreale trademark.

Further plans for the restaurant, as well as the name and exact location, will be revealed in the coming weeks.