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Downtown Farming: Portland's Beloved Urban Farmer Will Open a Cleveland Spot, and For That We Are Salivating

by Douglas Trattner

Last year, *Travel & Leisure* magazine named Portland's Urban Farmer restaurant one of the "Best Steakhouses in the U.S." Not long before that, *The Guardian* included the restaurant in its listing of "Top 10 Places to Eat in Portland."

Why should we care? Because in a few months, Urban Farmer will open a second location, in downtown Cleveland.

Located at the new Westin Downtown, which is undergoing a \$64-million renovation and slated to open in May, the restaurant is one of nearly a dozen red-hot concepts to come out of the Denver-based Sage Restaurant Group.

Sage co-founder Peter Karpinski has installed restaurants at the Pittsburgh Renaissance, the Curtis in Denver and the Renaissance in Chicago, to name a few, but none of them function like traditional hotel restaurants, he promises.

"Although all of our restaurants are adjacent to hotel properties, in general, 85 percent of our business comes from people staying outside the hotel - people who live and work in the community or are visiting but staying elsewhere," Karpinski explains.

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Urban Farmer is described as a high-end, farm-to-table steakhouse, making it better suited to our market in some aspects than its native Portland. Not only does the fertile Cuyahoga Valley nourish a robust local foods network, but our wide-open spaces support a large and growing number of small farmers and ranchers.

Nobody is more thrilled about the concept than 31-year-old Brad Cecchi, who is relocating to Cleveland from Sacramento for the executive chef position. For the past five years, Cecchi worked as a sous chef at Grange Restaurant, a popular spot that champions relationships with area farms and farmers.

"The farm-to-table concept is right up my alley," Cecchi explains. "Working in Sacramento, I kind of came up the ranks in that movement. And especially the meat-centric aspect of Urban Farmer - that's kind of my passion. Butchering meat, whole animal fabrication, charcuterie..."

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