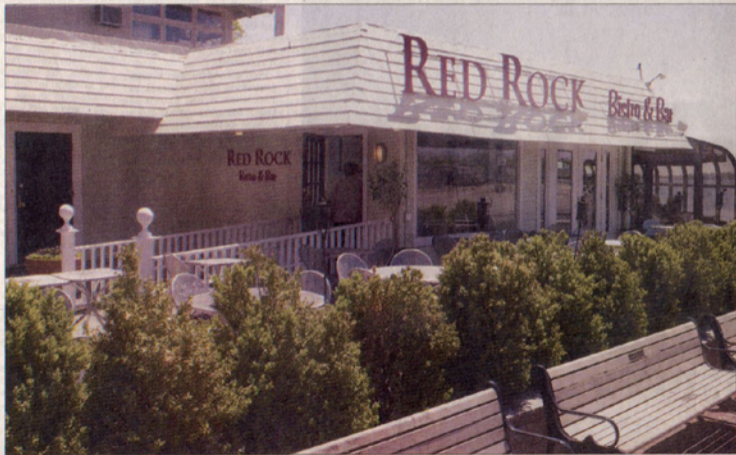


# BUSINESS



ITEM PHOTOS / OMEN O'BRIEN

Major renovations at the Red Rock Bistro in Swampscott were completed in one week in April, according to owner Paul Petersiel.

# Red Rock-ing Bistro

## Swampscott restaurant gets makeover

### **SWAMPSCOTT**

By **DAVID LISCIO**

THE DAILY ITEM

The late soul singer Otis Redding would have liked the Red Rock Bistro & Bar.

After all, the elegant yet casual Swampscott restaurant offers patrons a panoramic view of Nahant Bay and the Boston cityscape, as well as the beach, where it's possible to watch the tide rolling in.

Opened in July 1999, the Red Rock at 141 Humphrey St. is celebrating the completion of major renovations that were done at mach speed during a single week in April.

The cozy 13-stool bar tucked into a corner of the restaurant is gone, along with the walls that flanked it, replaced by an open, square-shaped arrangement with 28 seats, 20-inch television monitors mounted on the ceiling and facing four directions, and blue-tinted Miami-style mood lighting.

The new taproom even has a so-called "Hollywood corner" — a semi-circular seat for 6-8 that owner Paul Petersiel refers to as the "power booth" where people can see and be seen with a view of the restaurant action and the sea beyond.

"We did the entire renovation in a week," said Petersiel, who has lived

See **RED ROCK**

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The Red Rock Bistro bar, above, was made larger to accommodate those who thought it too small. Now, according to owner Paul Petersiel, 'some claim they can't get a stool because it's crowded.'

# RED ROCK

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in Swampscott for the past 30 years with the exception of a two-year stint as a Boston condo dweller.

"People kept telling us the bar was too small so we blew out the walls and made it bigger. Now some of them claim they can't get a stool because it's crowded."

Petersiel and his wife, Louise, purchased the restaurant in 1999 when it was known as Dale's, featuring seafood and a popular ice cream takeout.

"We were looking for a lobster roll that day and we stopped in at Dale's to see if they had one. They did, and it was great," Petersiel recalled. We couldn't believe the view. We agreed to buy the place on the spot."

Petersiel was ready for a new venture, although he had no experience in the restaurant business. He was fresh off a hiatus from running a multi-million-dollar company, Rite Foods, which capitalized on selling hummus under the name Tribe of Two Sheiks.

The hummus business was started years earlier in the basement of a friend's Brookline home. It grew exponentially and was still going strong when Petersiel and his

business partners sold it to a food conglomerate.

Petersiel immediately gutted the building and changed the name to Red Rock, but temporarily left undisturbed Dale's trademark rowboat on the roof and the sidewalk takeout. He didn't want to shock the locals, since Dale's had been a Humphrey Street landmark for 23 years and before that, Doane's restaurant.

Besides, the sidewalk takeout brought in families and customers of all ages.

An outdoor café was created next to the restaurant entrance, and the interior was opened up in keeping with Petersiel's need for space. "A lot of this was my wife's vision," he said. "Dale had a way of making outdoor spaces into indoor spaces, and we've been taking indoor spaces outside."

When the doors first opened at Red Rock, patrons were introduced to a menu founded on the New American cuisine, which advocates using locally-grown vegetables and other foodstuffs, and subscribes to an anything-goes attitude rather than traditional combinations of ingredients. Prices were comparatively high-end, but the lines stretched out the door.

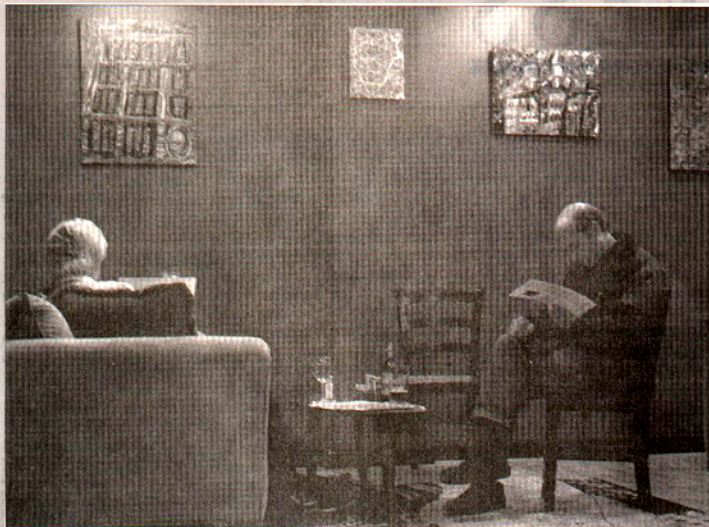
The Red Rock rapidly earned a reputation for gourmet dining, a place with an extensive and eclec-

tic wine list, bartenders skilled in making martinis, and live entertainment on weekends with no cover charge. It also became a hot spot for single professionals seeking an after-work watering hole. The expanded bar, with white walls and black ceiling, and the adjoining outdoor garden patio for smokers, was the result of that demanding crowd.

These days, Jenna, one of the Petersiel's two daughters, helps manage the restaurant. The original chef, Allen Bohnert, is gone. Lynn resident Lee Fannon, the former pastry chef who left briefly to take a post elsewhere as executive chef, now heads up the kitchen staff.

The Red Rock serves lunch and dinner and is open seven days a week, 11:30 a.m. to 1 a.m. On Sundays the place opens at 10 a.m. to accommodate brunch service. A private dining room with ocean views seats up to 70. In addition to 28 seats at the bar, the lower dining room and table seating around the bar can accommodate another 65.

"It's a lot of work, but I love it," said Petersiel. "I originally wanted to own the best clam shack in New England, the best one anybody has ever seen. But the more you visit other restaurants, the more ideas you get. I've got a lot of ideas."



ITEM PHOTO / REBA M. SALDANHA

Residents check out the menus at the Gulu-Gulu Cafe during a Central Square celebration on Thursday night.

# Central Square rebirth draws large crowds

## **LYNN**

Business leaders, city officials and local residents turned out en masse last week to celebrate the rebirth of Central Square.

The event included ribbon cuttings at several new or relocated businesses, such as Columbia Insurance, Omar & Oscar Jewelry, the Central Square Barber Shop, and the Gulu Gulu Café.

The Lynn Chamber of

Commerce called attention to the millions of dollars developers have invested in the neighborhood over the past two years, resulting in the conversion of former industrial buildings into street-level stores and upper-story residential condominiums. The Keith Loft condominiums was among the new addresses officially opened, featuring spacious interiors and large windows looking out at Central Square.

LynnArts, Raw Art Works and other organizations headquartered in the downtown square also hosted special events, such as an art auction and a film festival.

The revelers also gathered at the Atomic Clock in the heart of the square, adjacent to the railroad bridge. The clock, which has an antique appearance, is actually a state-of-the-art timepiece connected by satellite to a global GPS system.