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Saturday, January 17, 2015 Saturday, January 17, 2015

Barbarini finds higher ground

July 3, 2013 | Filed under: News | Posted by: admin

After Sandy swept into the South Street Seaport, flooding many of its businesses, Claudio Marini told Downtown Express while cleaning out the wreckage of his Front St. restaurant Barbarini, “What are we going to do? We are dealing with it. You have to have faith.”

Claudio and his wife Linda’s faith, though tested to the utmost, was rewarded last week when they announced that they had signed a lease for a space in the Financial District. Their restaurant, Da Claudio NYC Ristorante e Salumeria, will open at 21 Ann St. on the corner of Theatre Alley in early 2014, they said in an email newsletter.

“It’s almost been eight months, so it’s been quite a journey since the flood,” Linda said in a phone interview. “We weren’t really sure of our options initially, so we got out of the lease.”

At the same time, she said, the two other business partners went their separate ways, which made financing the project more difficult. In addition, many of the financial grants and loans to the area were conditional upon rebuilding in the business’s original location.

The couple decided to look for a new spot after Sandy’s surge left the restaurant with about \$1 million in losses. “One of the things that was very important to us was to be on higher ground,” Linda said.

The couple turned to “crowdfunding” platforms to raise money. One such place, Lucky Aunt, raised money for the “United Front on Historic Front Street” — nine businesses located on the heavily-flooded Seaport street. Linda said the campaign raised just under \$3,000. A separate effort on gofundme.com raised nearly \$16,000.

“If it wasn’t for our neighbors and our customers, we wouldn’t have gotten very far,” she said.

She and her husband turned to the Financial District, hoping to find somewhere further above sea level but not too far from their old neighborhood. She said they entered negotiations for several places before finding the space on Ann St.

Da Claudio has a 15-year lease for the space. The menu will be similar to Barbarini’s seasonal Italian dishes and local fare, but will also include new elements.

“You know, during this whole battle, we got closer to our neighbors. Of course we miss the Seaport, but we’re all in touch — however we can help or they can help — just because we’re a few blocks out, we’re still a part of the Seaport,” Linda said.

— **Kaitlyn Meade**

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