



Ready to ROLL

Chef Matt Maroni hopes to put meals on wheels this summer

By Erin Breton

When chef Matt Maroni read about New York and L.A.'s growing gourmet food truck industries, he was convinced the concept would be a great fit for Chicago.

Chicago, however, wasn't quite sure.

Current city regulations require food to be prepared and packaged before it's loaded on trucks, which means mobile chefs can't prepare meals on the spot. So Maroni and other food truck proponents—a group that includes Lockwood executive chef Phillip Foss and Troy Johnson of Chicago All Fired Up, among others—are urging the City Council to rethink the policy.

In the meantime, Maroni will serve naan sandwiches and other street-appropriate fare out of a small Edgewater eatery called **Gaztro-Wagon** (5973 N. Clark St.), which he hopes to open this month. About a week after the stationary shop launches, he'll start selling pre-packaged versions of his naan-wiches and other eats from a converted postal truck.

He's stoking the fire on Twitter (@chicagofood-trux) and chicagofoodtrucks.com, a site he and his wife built in a single day on their kitchen table.

We asked Maroni about the burgeoning movement and what the summer might hold for food trucks in Chicago.

The movement really has taken off in the last couple of months. How did you kick-start it?

I authored a model ordinance and pitched it to Scott Waguespack (32nd Ward), my alderman, as job creation and entrepreneurship. [We'd be] creating a whole new industry in Chicago.



Maroni's Gaztro-Wagon in Edgewater.



Matt Maroni
BARRY BRECHSEIN
PHOTOS FOR METROMIX

What kind of changes need to happen to put real food trucks on Chicago streets?

We need to make sure there are guidelines and that people aren't throwing trash on the ground. You'll have to go through the proper channels to get a [food truck] permit; safe handling practices need to be used. [But] if I could heat food properly, it'd be even fresher, prepared the moment you order—just like in a restaurant.

What's the status?

On June 9, the proposal will be split out into [council] committees. This touches a lot of city departments because it is a mobile business and includes

fees and taxes and stuff.

Nobody has said no. That's a great start. It could be two months [until it's decided]. It could be a year. I'm in it for the long haul.

Red tape aside, why do you think this is an ideal market for food trucks?

It's a great food town. The Chicago dog started on State Street in the 1900s—the street corner was where you went [to eat]. It's time to get back to that. That's how some of the great food evolutions in Chicago have been built. **ERIN BRETON IS A METROMIX**

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ON-THE-GO GOURMET

Flirty Cupcakes on Wheels

Owned by:

Tiffany Kurtz and husband Chris Sewall

Vehicle:

Converted van

Menu: Red

velvet, banana-chocolate and

other cupcakes

Location info:

Flirty Cupcakes

on Facebook;

@FlirtyCupcakes

on Twitter.

Chicago All Fired Up

Owned by:

Troy Johnson

Vehicle:

Formerly used to

haul fire

department

compressors

Menu: Fried

chicken, fish

(Johnson has

a Park District

license and can

cook in his truck)

Location info:

South parking

lot at 63rd Street

Beach (6300 S.

Lake Shore Drive)

Happy Bodega

Owned by:

Amanda Cavazos

Vehicle: Ice

cream truck

Menu: Gelato,

baguette sand-

wiches, period-

icals and fresh

flowers.

Location info:

Happy Bodega

on Facebook;

@HappyBodega

on Twitter when

it opens in late

July/early August.

—E.B.

Metromix pick of the week



FILE FOR METROMIX

Punk Rock Dinner at Blue 13

The June installment of River North eatery Blue 13's monthly rock 'n' roll dining series features a cocktail reception and five courses inspired by songs by the Clash, the Ramones, the Sex Pistols, the Misfits and the Dead Kennedys. Dishes include Serrano ham with Spanish olives, fried capers and spicy saffron-tomato sauce, inspired by the Clash's "Spanish Bombs," and octopus pancakes with mango gelee inspired by the Misfits' "Teenagers From Mars." \$50. Add wine pairings for \$15. 7 p.m. Wednesday. Reservations required. 416 W. Ontario St. 312-787-1400.

DINING DEALS THROUGH SUNDAY

ADOBO GRILL WICKER PARK

4:30-6 p.m. Wed.-Fri.: \$1 tacos and \$2-\$3 assorted appetizers in the bar; 2005 W. Division St. 773-252-9990.

BIN WINE CAFE

Sun.: Half-price bottles of wine; 1559 N. Milwaukee Ave. 773-486-2233.

BISTRO MARGOT

Wed.: \$26.95 three-course dinner; 4-6 p.m. Wed.-Thu.: \$19.95 three-course dinner; Wed.-Sun.: \$10 select entrees; 1437 N. Wells St. 312-587-3660.

BRANCH 27

Wed.: \$12 for sausage sandwich, fries and a Rogue draft; 1371 W. Chicago Ave. 312-850-2700.

BUONA TERRA

5-10 p.m. Thu.: \$21.95 three-course dinner. Includes any starter (soup, salad or

appetizer), secondi (pasta or entree) and dessert; 2535 N. California Ave. 773-289-3800.

CAFE MATOU

5 p.m. Wed.-Thu., Sun.: \$24 three-course menu; 1846 N. Milwaukee Ave. 773-384-8911.

EPIC

Sun.: \$39 three-course dinner; 112 W. Hubbard St. 312-222-4940.

FEAST

Wed.: \$25 prix-fixe menu with one glass of wine; 1616 N. Damen Ave. 773-772-7100.

GEMINI BISTRO

5-6:30 p.m. Wed.-Sun.: \$31 three-course dinner. For \$49, get wine pairings. Menu items include short rib ravioli, roasted salmon and steak frites; 2075 N. Lincoln Ave. 773-525-2522.

KOHAN JAPANESE RESTAURANT

Wed.-Fri.: \$11.95 lunch buffet (11:30 a.m.-3 p.m.). Buffet includes unlimited maki, miso soup and hot tea; Wed.-Sun.: 20 percent off with UIC ID. Discount not valid for delivery or lunch buffet; 730 W. Maxwell St. 312-421-6254.

LA SARDINE

11:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Wed.-Fri.: \$23 three-course lunch; Wed.-Sat.: \$27.50 three-course dinner; 111 N. Carpenter St. 312-421-2800.

MARIGOLD INDIAN RESTAURANT

Wed.: \$15 select bottles of wine; 4832 N. Broadway. 773-293-4653.

NORI CHICAGO

Wed.: Complimentary appetizer with order of two signature maki; Thu.: One free maki with order of sushi or sashimi platter;

Sun.: Half-price appetizers; 954 W. Diversey Pkwy. 773-904-1000.

PROVINCE

Wed.: \$10 for a burger and a Three Floyds beer. Available in the bar only; Wed.-Sat.: \$38 three-course dinner; Thu.: \$2 sliders, \$8 Three Floyds beer tasting. Tasting includes four beers. Both specials available in the bar only; 161 N. Jefferson St. 312-669-9900.

SUSHI TAIYO

Wed.: Half-price martinis; Sun.: Half-price bottles of wine; 58 E. Ontario St. 312-440-1717.

WILDFIRE

Wed.-Sun.: \$32 three-course dinner. Add wine pairings for \$13 per person; 5-6:30 p.m. Wed.-Fri.: Half-price appetizers in the lounge; 159 W. Erie St. 312-787-9000.