

New restaurant with seasoned chef coming to Port St. Lucie

By Paul Ivce

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PORT ST. LUCIE — A former restaurateur who sold his business nine years ago to go into semi-retirement is getting back into the business.

George Stamatogianis, who operated the since-shuttered Johnny's Rio Mar restaurant for 16 years until he sold it nine years ago, has purchased the site of the former Smoky's BBQ & Grill on the east side of U.S. 1 just north of Port St. Lucie Boulevard.

The 3,300-square-foot freestanding building has been for sale since Smoky's closed in January, said Chris Klein, co-owner of Stuart-based Treasure Coast Commercial Real Estate, which brokered the deal.

The property has been under contract since February, soon after it went on the market, but the sale could not be closed until last week because it took several months to re-plot the one-acre site to separate it from an adjoining property and "clean up the title," Klein said.

Stamatogianis paid \$525,000 for the property. He said he plans to spend another \$60,000 or so to convert the sports-bar themed barbecue restaurant to a family-style restaurant.

He said the new restaurant will serve breakfast, lunch and dinner with a combination of American, Italian and Greek cuisines.

Stamatogianis said he hasn't decided on a name for the place, but he and his son Steven hope to have it open by the end of October.

Johnny's Rio Mar was open for 30 years until it closed in June 2008, at least in part because traffic on that section of U.S. 1 was diverted by construction. The restaurant went through at least two owners after Stamatogianis sold it in 2002.



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