

Vignola

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PORTLAND'S NEW "VIGNOLA" RESTAURANT EARNING HIGH MARKS FOR DESIGN, DETAILS AND AMBIANCE

Portland, ME – The food press already has begun to spread the word about the creative menus and first-rate wine list at Vignola, Portland's new Italian-themed *osteria* (casual restaurant), which opened for business on July 7th. Word is spreading nearly as quickly, however, about the sleek design and unique architectural features the new restaurant boasts.

Vignola, located in the heart of Portland's historic Old Port neighborhood and filled to capacity each night of its opening weekend, was designed by Boston's C&J Katz Studio. In addition to Vignola, the C&J Katz impressive client roster includes such well-known customers as Crabtree & Evelyn; Wellesley College; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Cellular One; and, Boston's posh No. 9 Park restaurant.

"When we first stepped into the building at 10 Dana Street to view the Vignola space, we thought it was very raw, and incredibly beautiful," according to Jeffrey Katz, Owner of C&J Katz. "It was less a question of the 'potential' of the building, which obviously existed, and more a question of *how* we would best draw out the beauty and character of this historic space."

Katz and his project teammate, Kevin Musumano, looked in part to the restaurant's actual name for inspiration. Giacomo da Vignola (1507-1573) was widely revered as one of Italy's foremost Renaissance architects. Vignola is universally known in the architecture and design communities to this day for having authored the treatise on the five orders of architecture – still relied upon by students and professionals as an authoritative work. (Vignola later would succeed Michelangelo as the architect in charge of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, following Michelangelo's death.)

"In his time, Vignola worked in the classical mode, and we wanted the restaurant's space to capture the feeling of his work, while still presenting a casual, convivial atmosphere," Katz noted. "Our reference to the architect, then, was to take architectural 'parts' and make the surface 'whole' out of them. For example, we 'stacked' the molding patrons will see in the restaurant to make the final shapes – at the long bar, and around the restaurant's tall windows and the like."

Katz also paid special attention to the surface of the bar, which is end-grain (usually used in flooring), and made of mesquite wood, a very hard, sturdy surface. "'Vignola' also loosely translates to 'little vine,' and as such, it was natural to want to pay special attention to the restaurant's bar space. The way the mesquite is cut with the individual blocks showing up on the bar adds a definite amount of character," Katz added. "Again, we really liked focusing on the notion of taking separate parts together to make the whole in many of the restaurant's surfaces, and we think this really stands out when patrons enter the restaurant."

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C&J Katz also maximized the restaurant's high ceilings – which would prove the perfect backdrop for Vignola's eye-catching chandeliers. The chandeliers, fashioned from dark wine bottles, and engineered and produced by Portland's Burr Chase of Nostalgia Lighting, Inc., present arresting focal points against Vignola's exposed brick walls.

"We made a concerted effort to tie in the restaurant's specific food and wine offerings with its design. The idea was to be a bit less formal than Cinque Terre – Vignola's 'sister' restaurant – and to put more of an emphasis on wine," Katz said. "We wanted the space to be sophisticated but less 'designed,' and really wanted an appropriate atmosphere for Chef Lee Skawinski's particular way of cooking.

"The fact that Vignola is offering more of an organic, "earthy" slant – one that really reflects osterie throughout Italy – made us take the same direction in our approach," Katz added. "That's why, for example, visitors will find darker, wine-colored paint and trim. It's why they'll find the exposed brick and a very 'warm hue' to things. Since we had so much incredible light from the windows during the day, we wanted to make things a bit 'sleek' at night and therefore chose colors such as 'Aubergine' and 'Vintage Wine.' In any other space those colors would likely be overwhelming, yet in this space, they make a meaningful difference to an already-fantastic set-up."

About Vignola:

Gourmet Magazine, The New York Times, The Boston Globe, The James Beard Foundation, Yankee Magazine, Down East Magazine, The Portland Press Herald and Where to Eat, Boston already consider Cinque Terre one of Portland's "Must-Dine" experiences, and Vignola is sure to follow suit. The restaurant is open for dinner 7 nights per week, and as of July 28th will be serving lunch on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, beginning at 11:30 am.
For reservations at Vignola, call (207) 772-1330.

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