



CATHY CHENEY | PORTLAND BUSINESS JOURNAL

Old Spaghetti Factory owner Chris Dussin's new high-end restaurant opens Monday.

# Upscale dining comes to South Waterfront's Strand

European-infused restaurant sits on Willamette's bank

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The long-time owners and operators of the Old Spaghetti Factory restaurant chain will cement their grip on the upper tier of the market Monday when they open Lucier, a European-infused restaurant at Portland's RiverPlace.

Restaurateurs Tyanne and Chris Dussin are teaming with chef Pascal Chureau to open the restaurant, which will seat 100 in the dining room, with outdoor seating on the Willamette River for another 45.

The restaurant occupies a riverside building constructed by Onder Development as part of the three-building Strand complex of condominiums and is one of the most high-profile restaurant locations developed in recent years.

Dussin and his wife operate The Dussin Group, best known as the Portland-based company that runs the Old Spaghetti Factory chain of 37 family-style restaurants. Earlier this spring, the couple rolled out a new brand, Blue Sage Cafe, a casual family-oriented format with locations in strip malls in West Linn and Lake Oswego.

To Dussin, adding middle- and top-tier restaurants to the company portfolio satisfies a long-held desire to grow beyond its spaghetti roots.

His family has operated the Old Spaghetti Factory chain for 40 years. His parents and grandparents were in the Portland restaurant industry for decades before that and his mother remains a leading figure at the company's headquarters above the South Waterfront Old Spaghetti Factory.

The Dussins also own an upscale restaurant in San Diego, Dussini, and bought out

'Market cycles go up and down. I think **if you do anything right and you do it all the way,** people will come.'

**Chris Dussin**

The Dussin Group, operator of Lucier

Chureau's partners at the Pearl District's Fenouil in 2007

It's no secret a softening economy is taking a toll on the restaurant industry, but Dussin said he's not concerned about introducing Lucier when consumers are nervous about their financial health.

"Market cycles go up and down," he said. "I think if you do anything right and you do it all the way, people will come."

That's true, agrees Chad Mackay, president and chief operating officer of Mackay Restaurants. The Seattle-based company owns the El Gaucho chain of steak houses, including one in Portland at the Benson Hotel.

Mackay acknowledges the days of easy money flowing from dotcom executives are long gone. But establishments that know how to deliver a product and service will always find a market among people celebrating special occasions, he said.

"If you have a place where people feel like it's part of their lives, it will do well," said Mackay, who is not involved with Lucier.

Indeed, he said a down economy can be an opportunity. His company is preparing to open a \$5 million new edition of El Gaucho in Bellevue, Wash.

"Finally, there are construction companies and contractors that don't have years of backlog," he said.

Steve Kline, who with his wife owns Portland's Typhoon Restaurant Group, which operates high-end Thai restaurants, said a well-conceived business has a good chance of success.

"I have a lot of respect for that team," he said of the Dussins. "I'm a huge fan. If anyone can pull it off, they can."