

N.Y. chef from Parma buys Lockkeepers

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VALLEY VIEW — Lockkeepers, among the area's finest restaurants, is being sold to a celebrated New York chef returning to his Cleveland roots.

Dante Boccuzzi, a Parma native who is now executive chef at Charlie Palmer's luxurious Aureole in Manhattan, is buying Lockkeepers in an undisclosed financial deal.

The restaurant's down time



Boccuzzi

to redecorate before emerging re-named and reinvented. The new name is undecided.

Boccuzzi, 35, who rose from washing dishes at Stancato's in

will be brief. Boccuzzi will train the staff and test his new menu at Lockkeepers from March until about September, then close for about a week

Parma at 14 to training under the renowned Palmer, has worked as an executive chef in restaurants worldwide, including Armani/Nobu in Milan, Italy.

Lockkeepers — and Cleveland — offers stability.

"For me, I was looking for a better quality of life for my family," Boccuzzi, who is married with three young children, said from New York yesterday. His parents and a sister live in Parma.

The Lockkeepers staff of 80 will be given a chance to continue with

the new restaurant. Ky-wai Wong, executive chef since August, will stay, Boccuzzi said.

Lockkeepers owners Frank and Malisse Sinito opened the restaurant in 1992, converting a former tavern on the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail. Frank Sinito also runs a real estate firm, Millenia Housing Management Ltd. He said he's selling the restaurant to spend more time with their three young children.

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"I'm 44 years old," he said, "and can't work 100 hours a week anymore."

Lockkeepers, which was re-

built and expanded on another site at Rockside and Canal roads in 2002, was awarded AAA's Four Diamond rating annually from 2004 to 2006. But reservations didn't match the recognition.

Construction on Rockside Road in 2004 and 2005 cut business by nearly a third, said Sinito.

In late November, Sinito

closed the retro Park City Diner, Lockkeepers' more-casual companion at his Thornburg Station.

The Park City space may also have a new face soon: Sinito said he is close to leasing the vinyl-and-chrome 1940s-style diner to a local "well-known operator" he declined to identify.

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