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WHAT'S NEW

OPENINGS: KULETO'S EPIC ROASTHOUSE & WATERBAR

Bygone fantasy
provides backdrop
for Epic Roasthouse

A pump house on the bay — or one that had worked properly — could have saved San Francisco from fire's worst ravages after the 1906 earthquake. That's the fantasy behind the design of Epic Roast-house, the meat-centric half of Pat Kuleto's new twin restaurants, which opened last night on San Francisco's Embarcadero.

Sturdy limestone blocks support two-story-high timbered ceilings, allowing for large windows and unparalleled views of the Bay Bridge and the waterfront from the 120-seat main dining room. A tall red pipe fitted with valves rises from the floor and crosses the room high over a 7-foot flywheel and pulley — all fabricated to create the steakhouse-as-pump house look. A gigantic metal fireplace dominates one wall.

The team: Multi-restaurateur Kuleto (Boulevard, Jardiniere, Farallon, Nick's Cove) teams with New Orleans-bred chef and co-owner Jan Birnbaum, who made his name at Campton Place in San Francisco before opening Catahoula in Calistoga and later departing for Sazerac in Seattle. Nicole Burke, recently of Garibaldi's of San Francisco and Oakland, is wine director.

The cuisine: Meat is the theme, with some cuts sourced locally. Think thick prime rib, rib-eye and porterhouse roasted in a wood oven and served on the bone. Birnbaum is going for "modern steakhouse," so sauteed spinach with garlic confit and other seasonal vegetables replace the traditional creamed spinach. Fish and poultry are well represented on the menu, too, along with dashes of New Orleans flavor.

The vibe: Sophisticated San Francisco cuisine meets corn belt Americana under the looming towers of the Bay Bridge. Added features: sleek leather booths, reclaimed mahogany tabletops and an upstairs bar that looks out on the waterfront's giant bow-and-arrow sculpture.

Epic Roasthouse, 369 The Embarcadero (between Folsom and Harrison streets), San Francisco; (415) 369-9955 or epicroasthousesf.com. Lunch, dinner and weekend brunch. Starters, \$5-\$16; entrees, \$21-\$76; desserts, \$10. Full bar. Reservations and credit cards accepted.

— Carol Ness



A flywheel and pulley dominate the dining room at Pat Kuleto's Epic Roasthouse.