

'Corridor Communities' in Rockland, Orange expand dining options

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Restaurateurs have capitalized on all that Sloatsburg and Tuxedo have to offer.

Just a few short years ago, people who lived in or traveled through Sloatsburg and Tuxedo were pretty limited when it came to dining options.

Rhodes North Tavern and Characters Restaurant were solid, affordable options on Route 17 in Sloatsburg, and just up the road in Tuxedo, Tuxedo Sushi and the now shuttered Tuxedo Junction Inn were popular with locals.

But the lack of variety didn't do much to attract would-be homebuyers or tourists.

"A common complaint was that we had nothing here," said Shari Brooks, a Tuxedo resident and town employee. "People have been asking for more upscale eateries for years."

And now they have them, thanks to a handful of restaurateurs who have capitalized on all that so-called "corridor communities" — named for their proximity to Harriman State Park and its plethora of outdoor activities — have to offer.



Dottie Audrey's Bakery & Kitchen in Tuxedo. Their avocado toast achieved national acclaim after being featured on The Today Show. (Photo: John Meore/The Journal News)

The revitalization began in 2015 in northern Tuxedo with the opening of Dottie Audrey's, a bakery/kitchen whose recipes are rooted in family tradition. Four years later, the place is a rousing success, with residents and tourists alike lining up on weekend mornings (and afternoons) for the perfectly textured pancakes, scratch-made scones and hearty sandwiches. (Their avocado toast achieved national acclaim after being featured on The Today Show.)

The decision to open an eatery on a desolate stretch of Route 17 was a simple one for owner Patrick Jenkins: "We saw a desert of food options here."

He wasn't the only one.

In 2017, local business owner Michael Bruno opened The Valley Rock Inn & Mountain Club on Sloatsburg's section of Route 17. It's now an oasis complete with a farm market, guest houses, pool and an open air bar/restaurant where guests can sip artisanal cocktails and nosh on wood fired pizza from the heated deck year-round.



Just around the bend is Seven Lakes Station, which opened in 2016 as a tap room showcasing craft beers from small batch brewers and has now evolved into a heated beer garden with a full menu — everything from eggplant fritters and empanadas to mussels and frites and burgers — and live music on weekends.

[MAP: New dining options in the 'corridor communities'](#)

Seven Lakes Station in Sloatsburg.

(Photo: John Meore/The Journal News)

And rounding out the space adjacent to the Sloatsburg train station parking lot is The Village Blend, a warm and welcoming coffeehouse where, in the warmer months, customers can sip delicious dark roast at a table on the inviting cobblestone walkway.



Village Twists, croissant with cream cheese and chocolate chips at the Village Blend Cafe in Sloatsburg Nov. 8, 2018. (Photo: Peter Carr/The Journal News)

“By making our alleyway beautiful, we created a connection between the parking lot, the train and downtown,” said Barbara Berntsen, a Sloatsburg resident and owner of The Village Blend. “This area is so vibrant right now.”

And it’ll get even better in 2020, when Tuxedo Park resident, Marlene Guinchard, and her son, Jordi Loaeza, plan to open an outpost of their popular Astoria, Queens, restaurant, Chela & Garnacha, specializing in Mexican street food and margaritas, in the space that briefly housed Happy Belly Kitchen.

This past October, Tuxedo residents rejoiced over the highly anticipated opening of Steve’s Wood Fired Pizza, also located on Route 17. (Are you seeing a pattern?)



Bartender Scott Ruel draws a beer from the tap at Seven Lakes Station in Sloatsburg. (Photo: John Meore/The Journal News)

As a child, owner Steve Germano and his father often went fishing in Harriman State Park, so he was familiar with the area — and eager to introduce diners to his consummately crisped pies.

So when the building that formerly housed Tuxedo's beloved Take-A-Break restaurant came up for sale a couple of years ago, he bought it, and rebuilt it in the same rustic barn-style footprint as the original — albeit with upgrades such as exposed beams, gleaming marble countertops, and a state-of-the-art brick oven.

But if you do desire a less expensive meal, Route 17 once again has you covered. Bentley's Deli, an old Tuxedo standby located across the street from the town's train station, was recently purchased by Tuxedo Park resident Victor Ulysse, who hopes to return the spot to its former glory as an inviting and affordable hangout.

All of which bodes well for business owners, residents and those who drive down Route 17 on their way to hiking, biking, apple picking or outlet shopping in the picturesque Hudson Valley. "Really, the only thing missing now is good barbecue," said Brooks. If you build it, they will come.