

James Beard nominee shifts gears after closing acclaimed WA restaurant



James Beard nominee Mike Easton has joined Walla Walla's The Kitchen at Abeja as executive chef.
THE KITCHEN AT ABEJA



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A restaurant that The New York Times [called one of the 50 best in America in 2023](#) has closed, at least temporarily.

James Beard-nominated chef Mike Easton has closed Bar Bacetto in the Eastern Washington town of Waitsburg as he opens a pizzeria in nearby Walla Walla and prepares to take over as executive chef at the Abeja winery on July 1.

Easton is a two-time Beard award nominee for best chef in the Northwest and the [former owner of acclaimed Seattle restaurants Il Corvo and Il Nido](#). (Il Corvo closed in 2020.) He and his wife, Erin Easton, opened the 12-seat Bar Bacetto last year, quickly earning national acclaim. That includes a [Beard nomination this year for the country's best new restaurant](#).

Bar Bacetto's closure is an "extended hiatus," Easton said in a news release. His new pizza restaurant, Bacetto's Detroit Style, was set to open Wednesday in downtown Walla Walla, per [a report](#) from The Seattle Times.

At Abeja, Easton will serve as executive chef at the winery's restaurant, The Kitchen at Abeja, where he's planning a Tuscan-style set-price menu. The 38-acre winery property also includes the Inn at Abeja, which is managed by Columbia Hospitality.

"I am a chef who seeks inspiration from the ingredients around me," Easton said. "Over the coming weeks, I will be tasting Abeja's wines, forming a relationship with them, and writing menus that complement their unique flavors."

The first menu will debut Aug. 1.

Easton is replacing chef Jake Crenshaw, who is taking over as the culinary director at Walla Walla Community College.
