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Gansevoort Market Owner Plans to Open More Food Halls in New York City

Chris Reda says he is looking at more areas for his 'Mrkt' concept

A view from inside the Gansevoort Market in Manhattan's Meatpacking District on Wednesday. *PHOTO: KEVIN HAGEN FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*

By **CHARLES PASSY**

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With upscale food courts opening across New York City, the owner of one has his sights set on creating a string of the venues.

Chris Reda, owner of Gansevoort Market in Manhattan's Meatpacking District, said he plans to open food halls in lower Manhattan and the Bronx's Grand Concourse neighborhood.

In an interview Wednesday, Mr. Reda said his goal is to bring the gourmet-minded concept "to neighborhoods that are thriving and don't have something like this."

Gansevoort Market will relocate in the neighborhood early next year because its location at 52 Gansevoort St. is being redeveloped. It will take 12,000 square feet at 353 W. 14th St., near Ninth Avenue.

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vendors, which include Crêpe Sucre, Dojo Sushi Express and Ed's Lobster Bar, are planning to move to the new space, said Mr. Reda. The Gansevoort address is slated to become home to a new iteration of Pastis, the Meatpacking District restaurant that closed in 2014.

Food halls have multiplied in New York City: Gotham West Market on the Far West Side, City Kitchen in Midtown and Berg'n in Brooklyn's Crown Heights area. They offer many dining options like shopping-mall food courts, but their vendors offer gourmet and artisanal foods.

New projects continue to be announced, including the Pennsy, a hall set to open early next year near Penn Station. Celebrity chefs are getting into the game, with Anthony Bourdain hatching plans for one at Pier 57 in Chelsea and Jean-Georges Vongerichten working on one to be in the South Street Seaport.

Operators of halls are looking to expand: The Gotham Organization, which runs the Gotham West Market, is planning to open a hall in Brooklyn's Fort Greene neighborhood next year.

Yet, Mr. Reda could emerge as one of the city's most ambitious hall operators. His latest moves are in addition to the work he is doing with the developers of Empire Stores, a retail project in Brooklyn's Dumbo neighborhood that is to include a 10,000-square-foot hall. He also owns the Griffin, a Meatpacking District nightclub, and is planning to open a hall in Miami Beach next year.

While many of these projects will be united under a brand name, "Mrkt," Mr. Reda said he doesn't consider them a chain.

"Every market is going to be a little bit different," he said. He declined to say how large a financial investment he and his business partners are making in the halls they are developing but confirmed it is in the seven figures.

Mr. Reda has his fans, including Jared Epstein, a partner with Aurora Capital, the real-estate company that is among the forces behind the Gansevoort Market redevelopment and the new Pastis. He worked to help Mr. Reda find his new spot and believes he can go far with his empire of food halls.

“He’ll be successful wherever he brings the concept,” said Mr. Epstein.

Nevertheless, the rapid growth of food halls in New York City has some restaurant-industry insiders cautioning that the market could become saturated.

Food writer Allen Salkin is one of the skeptics. A chain of food halls might dilute what makes the concept special, he said, adding that it seemed as if Mr. Reda’s goal was to create “the Cinnabon of hand-pulled noodles.”

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Mr. Reda said his halls wouldn’t have a cookie-cutter approach. “I’m not looking to take the same vendors at Gansevoort and bring them to the Bronx,” he said.

Mr. Reda has some history of financial troubles, having landed on New York state’s list of the 250 top delinquent taxpayers with a tax debt of more than \$1.5 million.

Mr. Reda said the situation involved a business that wasn’t fully under his control and the issue is being addressed.

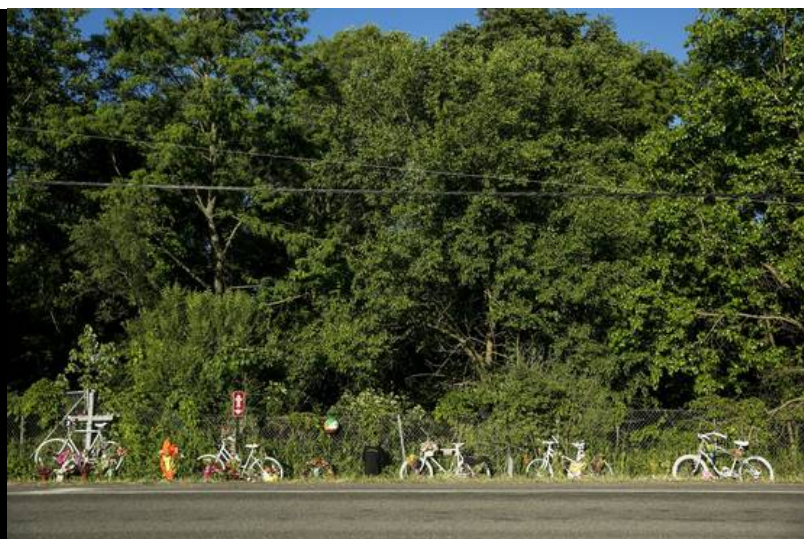
Mr. Reda and others connected with his projects remain bullish about their plans.

Nicholas Silvers, a founding partner of Tavros, the development firm behind the space on 14th Street where Mr. Reda is relocating the Gansevoort Market, said there is room for many food halls in the city, especially in high-traffic areas where tourists and locals alike are looking for convenient, quality alternatives to traditional restaurants.

“We’ve moved past food trucks,” Mr. Silvers said.

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