

Today's Sunbeam, Wednesday, August 11, 2004

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The 'ship'-shape of things to come?

<Staff photo by Larry Lohmeyer>

Swordmaster Ryan Travis, left, takes on world-renowned chef, Martin CJ Mongiello, center, and Andrew King, right. Mongiello and King are the owners of Jersey Sailor Restaurant & Show. They would like to open one of their restaurants at the Riverwalk area in Penns Grove. For story, Page A-3.

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<Staff photo by Larry Lohmeyer>

The proposed Penns Grove Riverwalk complex will be built on this currently unused piece of land.

Penns Grove's Riverwalk appeals to popular chef

By Martin C. Bricketto, Staff Writer

PENNS GROVE - Shovels haven't hit dirt for the Penns Grove Riverwalk complex yet, but it already has one interested tenant.

World-renowned Chef Martin CJ Mongiello wants to open a "Jersey Sailor Restaurant and Show" once the 25-acre Riverwalk becomes a reality. A separate location is due to open at the historic Cold Spring Village Museum in southern Cape May County later this month.

"It's been a long journey," said the long-time cooking professional at an event along the currently bare shore here which Legend Properties, Inc. hosted. Mongiello and two associates were decked out in authentic 19th-century sailor garb, complete with swords.

The maritime-themed restaurant promises to mix good food with live-action pirate vs. privateer battles--like Medieval Times but out to sea. It isn't an absolute lock for the Riverwalk, but the owner has signed a letter of intent--a non-binding, pre-lease agreement for the property.

Mongiello's resume would make any chef--or adventurer--proud. He left the tri-state area when he was 18 and joined the U.S. Navy. He served for the last 21 years in several important functions, including Executive Chef to the President of the United States.

He says Penns Grove would be a great location for his establishment because of the area's history and the Riverwalk's proposed nautical design.

"This is the type of thing we gravitate toward," he said.

Mongiello even hopes to produce a television show entitled "Cooking at the Penns Grove Riverwalk" that would air locally.

As for the Riverwalk itself, developer George Kearns III said he is expecting final site approvals from Delaware and New Jersey this fall and work on the project could begin soon thereafter.

The Riverwalk, which would be located on a large tract of land along the Delaware River between West Main Street and Railroad Avenue, will include restaurants and retail shops.

He hopes to have areas along the waterfront open for business by next spring or summer.