

Pasta eatery coming to Vancouver waterfront

Portland chain Grassa's 'artisan comfort' food has its roots in food carts

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The RiverWest building at The Waterfront Vancouver in the first half of 2020. (Will Campbell/The Columbian)

A popular Portland pasta restaurant called Grassa is coming to The Waterfront Vancouver's RiverWest building.

The new restaurant is under tenant renovations on the western corner of the building and should be open in August at 700 Waterfront Way, according to Kurt Huffman, a partner in Grassa.

[Grassa](#) has three locations in Portland and one in Lake Oswego, Ore. Vancouver will be the fifth for the expanding Portland-based chain. Grassa owner Rick Gencarelli opened his first food cart, Lardo, in Southeast Portland, which then became a brick-and-mortar in 2012 and later added a location. He opened the first Grassa in 2013.

Grassa is known for its [pasta](#), made in the restaurant in front of its patrons but in a fast-casual style. Dishes include Pork Belly Mac & Cheese with jalapenos, red onion and cornbread crumbs for \$15. It also has seasonal options, such as the Pumpkin Agnolotti, and it offers salads, appetizers (including meatballs) and cocktails.

“Grassa pushes the concept of artisan comfort food slung in a no-frills fashion,” its website states.

Huffman said restaurants, such as Little Conejo, showed them that a Portland-based restaurant or food cart could be successful in Vancouver.

“When the opportunity came up to look at the waterfront, we found a great one,” he said. “We’re ecstatic about Vancouver. We think we’re going to be really busy.”

Just before the COVID-19 pandemic struck, Grassa added a Vancouver location to its website with a “coming soon” tag, but the restrictions around the virus delayed lease negotiations, according to Josh Oliva, owner of RiverWest.

The restaurant filed a business license with the city of Vancouver that was granted last month.

[BeWell Juice Bar](#), next door to the future Grassa, will possibly also open before July 4, according to Oliva.