

Christy Bono Is Reopening Christy's On Broadway



■ By **TIFFANY RIDER**
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Christy Bono is selling Bono's restaurant and reopening Christy's Ristorante on Broadway by November.

Bono told the Business Journal she was approached during last year's holiday season by operators of Nick's Restaurant, which has locations in Laguna Beach and San Clemente. While she wasn't interested at that time, by February she had a change of heart.

Bono said that, over the years, she has been approached many times by various operators and agents of clients to sell her Belmont Shore restaurant. She said she felt "very strongly, about the restaurant coming in." Nick's coming to 2nd Street might help with what she called "the loss of neighborhood quaintness on 2nd Street."

"Look, if Pinkberry Yogurt left, that says a lot, as they are a strong corporation that thrives in all their locations," Bono said. "And Paul Sahlin Tiffany Lamps closed last month. It's sad. I feel confident that [Nicks' will] be an asset and a breath of fresh air to the location as they are not a faceless corporation but owners who care about their food, ambiance and customers."

Christy Bono is selling her Bono's restaurant on 2nd Street and reopening Christy's Ristorante on Broadway. Bono hopes to open Christy's in November. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Thomas McConville)

Although Nick's Web site indicates the restaurant is opening in Belmont Shore in 2012, Bono said the new owners would probably take the location mid-October to November. "They are taking it as is," she said.

While her deal is still in escrow, Bono said she hopes Christy's could be open by the end of November. "I'm trying to have these run somewhat concurrent," she said.

Christy's has been closed for a little over two years. Known as a neighborhood gathering place, Christy's opened about 19 years ago, soon after Bono moved to Long Beach from Santa Monica. She started with one storefront and just under 700 square feet, and as the restaurant's popularity grew, she bought up the three storefronts next door. She opened Bono's in March 2004 and sold Christy's in October of that year.

Bono said she would prefer to not comment on the sale price of her 2nd Street restaurant and the purchase price of Christy's. However, she did admit that rent at the Broadway location – which is a larger space than Bono's – is roughly two-thirds less than her rent on 2nd Street.

"I'm very grateful to be able to go back to Christy's because, with the economic climate, the rents on 2nd Street and the restrictions that are beginning to be imposed . . . 2nd Street is just changing," Bono said. "It's not what it was when I moved [to Long Beach] 20 years ago. . . . I feel part of the demise of 2nd Street, and

why the 'Mom & Pop' establishments departed, is simply because the rents are too high and the landlords are not factoring in the current economic situation. I must add however, my [rent] . . . was slightly lower than most, and [the landlord was] always pleasant to deal with."

Bono said she is looking forward to returning to Broadway and is pleased to see the way the area and surrounding neighborhoods like 4th Street Retro Row are developing. "It's such a big city, and to find these distinct little neighborhoods with their own characteristics, that's what makes it so unique," she said.

Bono said she wants to change the former look of Christy's completely by adding lots of glass and color for a fresh and open ambiance. She said she is taking her father's vest and the family memorabilia from Bono's, which was named in dedication and honor of Sonny Bono. "Cher was kind enough to give me my dad's fur vest from when they were up and coming," she said. "That's is framed and displayed very proudly."

Christy's has a liquor license and will reopen its bar to offer fresh new beverages and cocktails created by Bono's bartender/mixologist. "This time there's going to be farm fresh, local, organic vegetables and fruits – fruits for beverages and cocktails and vegetables for the small plates and entrees," Bono said. "I want to do a lot of healthy and fresh infusions. I'm really excited about that."

The menu concept is focused on small plates priced from about \$7 to \$11, as well as incorporating favorites from Bono's, including her family recipe for rigatoni with meat sauce, and some new items to the list of entrees.

"I don't know about you, but when I go to eat I love to order appetizers and take a little bit of different things, especially when you're going with someone, and be able to share those," Bono said. "I've always tried to do what I like with my food, and so far I've been pretty lucky with that." ■