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About this blog: I am a perpetually hungry twenty-something journalist, born and raised in Menlo Park and currently working at the Palo Alto Weekly as education and youth staff writer. I graduated from USC with a major in Spanish and a minor in jo... (More)

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Foie gras returns to Peninsula menus

Uploaded: Jan 9, 2015

After the news broke Wednesday that California's ban of foie gras, the prized fattened liver of a duck or goose, [had been overturned](#), chefs throughout the state rushed to add the French delicacy back to their menus.

The foie gras ban, backed by animal-welfare activists who oppose the force-feeding of duck and geese to enlarge their livers, initially went into effect in 2012, though many restaurants, including Michelin-starred Chez TJ in Mountain View, [continued](#)

[to serve it](#) as a complimentary dish or simply by calling it a different name. (For more on the that, read [this](#) Grub Street interview with Los Angeles Chef Ari Taymor, who actually grew up in Palo Alto and graduated from Paly in 2003.)

"We never stopped (serving it)," said Chez TJ Chef Jarad Gallagher.

The restaurant operated within the law, serving it as they saw fit to some customers without charging and never putting it on the menu. (The law stated that "a person may not force-feed a bird for the purpose of enlarging the bird's liver beyond normal size, or hire another person to do so" and that "a product may not be sold in California if it is the result of force-feeding.")

But since a federal judge ruled Wednesday that the ban is unconstitutional because it interferes with an existing federal law that regulates poultry products, it's back on the menu. Seared foie gras will be included in the Chez TJ tasting menu starting tonight, Friday, Jan. 9, and will continue to appear in different forms as Gallagher cures some of it.

"I'm pretty happy about it," Gallagher said. "I don't think it ever should have been illegal."

Foie gras will also regain its permanent place on Woodside's Michelin-starred The Village Pub's menu starting the evening of Friday, Jan. 9, said Karey Walker, who runs public relations for the restaurant group that owns Village Pub.

"Until the ban, it was always offered," she wrote in an email Thursday.

While it will change often, Walker said Village Pub Chef Dmitry Elperin will kick off the return with Hudson Valley Foie Gras (a producer in New York) pain d'epices mille-feuille (layers of bread) with toasted pistachio and candied kumquat (\$28).



Starting Saturday, foie gras -- seared, with wild mushrooms, quince mostarda and balsamic vinegar will also be on the menu at [Madera at The Rosewood](#) in Menlo Park for \$35.

All locations of the Alexander's Steakhouse chain are "excited to reintroduce foie gras," said Director of Public Relations Marilyn Skinner.

However, The Sea in Palo Alto will only be serving it as a special for the time being, Skinner said.

Pastis on California Avenue in Palo Alto has had foie gras on the menu almost every night since the ban was lifted, manager Malek Kaci said.

Despite the outpouring of excitement in many restaurant kitchens throughout the state this week, one Palo Alto chef wasn't celebrating foie gras' triumphant return.

"Although it's nice that the ban has been moved, I quite frankly find it weird and distasteful that so many chefs are celebrating as if some kind of war has been won," said Guillaume Bienaimé, chef and owner of French restaurant [Zola](#). "Yes, we will be serving foie gras at Zola from time to time, but we're not looking to rub it in anyone's face. Considering the events that are occurring in France right now, it would be nice if some chefs could show some restraint and class."