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Embattled restaurateur cutting back

Lynch closes 3 spots, sells 2 amid pandemic changes and workplace complaints

By Diti Kohli

GLOBE STAFF

Famed Boston chef Barbara Lynch will scale back her fine-dining empire, closing three of her renowned restaurants and selling off two more, amid post-pandemic struggles and just months after allegations surfaced that she had fostered a toxic work environment.

The Barbara Lynch Collective said Friday that its three adjoin-

ing Fort Point restaurants — Menton, Sportello, and Drink — would close immediately, “costing the jobs of 100 staffers.” In the South End, the leases, licenses, and assets of two Lynch spots — The Butcher Shop and Stir — will be sold to “former proteges,” whom the company did not name.

Only No. 9 Park on Beacon Hill, Lynch’s first restaurant, B&G Oysters in the South End,

and her newest endeavor that opened in April, The Rudder in Gloucester, will remain.

It’s a big setback for one of Boston’s best-known chefs, who famously climbed from the Old Colony housing project in South Boston to the highest echelons of the culinary world. In 1998, Lynch launched No. 9 Park to much acclaim and a decade later helped turn Fort Point — then a quiet warehouse district — into a

premiere dining destination with Sportello, Menton, and Drink. Her up-from-the-bootstraps story and brash persona — along with her exquisite Italian cuisine — won her a devoted following among high-end diners.

But changes wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic proved tough for restaurateurs everywhere, and Lynch was no excep-

LYNCH, Page A10



✗ MENTON



✗ SPORTElLO



✗ DRINK



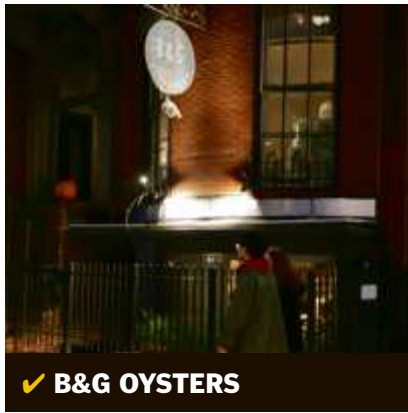
\$ THE BUTCHER SHOP



\$ STIR



✓ NO. 9 PARK



✓ B&G OYSTERS



✓ THE RUDDER



SUZANNE KREITER/GLOBE STAFF/FILE/2017

Chef and restaurateur Barbara Lynch will be immediately closing Menton, Sportello, and Drink, all in Fort Point. South End restaurants The Butcher Shop and Stir will be sold along with their leases and licenses. The three Lynch properties that will remain open are No. 9 Park on Beacon Hill, Lynch’s first restaurant; B&G Oysters in the South End; and The Rudder in Gloucester, her newest endeavor that opened in April.

Not a surprise, maybe, but sad nonetheless

By Devra First

GLOBE STAFF

The last years have been troubled ones for Barbara Lynch, one of Boston’s most acclaimed chefs. Many of her difficulties — as with her successes — have been self-made. The Globe and The New York Times reported on accusations of workplace abuse and harassment by employees. Kitchen

staff at Menton walked off the job. Two former workers sued Lynch, alleging she shorted them on tips earlier in the pandemic.

CRITIC’S NOTEBOOK

The Butcher Shop closed for summer break, then remained dark. All of this played out against a backdrop of challenges across the board for the hospitality industry: high rents,

high food costs, a crushing labor shortage, a downtown altered by a pandemic.

It wasn’t, therefore, a staggering surprise when the Barbara Lynch Collective announced in a press release Friday that it would close the high-end Menton and Lynch’s other Congress Street properties, Sportello and Drink. The company said The Butcher Shop and Stir in the

South End were under agreement for sale, while No. 9 Park, B&G Oysters, and the Rudder in Gloucester remained in business.

It was sad, though.

It is bad if people are bad to their employees. Full stop. It is bad if leaders are bad at leading, and if managers are bad at managing. It is bad if powerful peo-

NOTEBOOK, Page A10

Coach Belichick, we still hardly know you

Amid speculation about departure comes nostalgia for the glory days

By Beth Teitell

GLOBE STAFF

The living eulogy. It’s everyone’s dream. People gush about you — and you get to hear them! All your faults forgiven, forgotten, laughed off. *Yes, she ran jokes into the ground in a way that could get annoying, and once mistakenly canceled her son’s spring break plane reservation, but hey, “that’s just Beth being Beth.”*

Well, guess who seems to be in luck, living eulogy-wise? Bill Belichick. Remember him? That trend-setting fashionista? So articulate, warm, and verbose.

On Friday, with rumors swirling that a planned meeting between Belichick and the Patriots ownership on Monday could mean the end for the coach, Patriots Nation went into nostalgia mode.

Yeah, sure, over the years the media has griped about his so-called rude or dismissive behavior, his infamous refusal to answer questions, the whole “We’re onto Cincinnati” thing. But hey, that was just Bill being Bill!



DANIELLE PARHIZKARAN/GLOBE STAFF

Bill Belichick has coached 24 seasons for the Patriots and never lost as many games as he has this season (12).

BELICHICK, Page A6

Top court takes case on Trump eligibility

Justices assert central role in deciding direction of presidential election

By Adam Liptak

NEW YORK TIMES

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court agreed Friday to decide whether former president Donald Trump is eligible for Colorado’s Republican primary ballot, thrusting the justices into a pivotal role that could alter the course of this year’s presidential election.

The sweep of the court’s ruling is likely to be broad. It will probably resolve not only whether Trump may appear on the Colorado primary ballot after the state’s top court declared that he had engaged in insurrection in his efforts to subvert the 2020 election, but it will most likely also determine his eligibility to run in the general election and to hold office at all.

Not since Bush v. Gore, the 2000 decision that handed the presidency to George W. Bush, has the Supreme Court taken such a central role in an election for the nation’s highest office.

The case will be argued Feb. 8, and the court will probably decide it quickly. The Colorado Republican Party had urged the justices to rule by March 5, when many states, including Colorado, hold primaries.

The number of challenges to Trump’s eligibility across the country can only have added pres-

SUPREME COURT, Page A6

Dire economic predictions miss the mark

Consumer confidence and wages on upswing as inflation numbers ease

By Jim Puzzanghera

GLOBE STAFF

WASHINGTON — President Biden has many worries: wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, migrants surging across the southern border, a looming government shutdown, and, as he addressed Friday, the fate of American democracy.

The US economy might no longer be near the top of the list.

Defying predictions a year ago that the nation would be in a recession right now, the economy enters 2024 on a roll. An unexpectedly strong jobs report Friday is the latest development fueling optimism among Democrats on an issue that polls show is the most important to voters — yet one on which Biden continues to have a dismal approval rating.

“You’d be hard pressed to have come up with a better economic story than the one that we’re witnessing right now coming out of a pandemic,” said Representative Richard Neal, a Massachusetts Democrat.

Inflation has come down significantly from a

ECONOMY, Page A7



A little flaky

Saturday: Sun before snow. High: 35-40. Low: 31-36.

Sunday: Wet snow. High: 32-37. Low: 20-25.

Sunrise: 7:13 Sunset: 4:26 Comics and Weather, **D4-5.**

Obituaries, **C10.**

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The longtime chief of the National Rifle Association, Wayne LaPierre, said he would step down on the eve of a corruption trial set to start next week. **A2.**

The leader of Hezbollah said that his group must retaliate after a presumed Israeli strike hit a Beirut neighborhood. **A4.**

Twenty-one restaurants in Boston’s North End and the neighborhood’s Chamber of Commerce filed a federal lawsuit against the city, saying its outdoor dining program was unfair to the businesses. **B1.**

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