



Vegans (and all lovers of delicious fresh food), rejoice:

In January, a second plant-based restaurant opened for business in Bethesda. Joining the already heralded Planta is **Rooted3**, an eatery and market run by Chevy Chase residents Molly Gibson and Melissa Peppe. Embracing the motto that “good food = good mood,” Rooted3’s totally plant-based menu is free of nine top allergens, say Gibson and Peppe: milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, crustacean shellfish, wheat, soybeans and sesame. Gibson, a trained chef, and Peppe use 100% organic whole foods, often sourced from the Lancaster Farm Fresh Cooperative, and serve the fare in compostable containers. From 7 a.m. on weekdays and 8 a.m. on weekends, customers can order gut-friendly smoothies, gluten-free pancakes and protein waffles at the counter before sitting inside the beachy botanical-inspired cafe or in the outdoor courtyard. For lunch or dinner, try a hand-crafted bowl, such as the umami shroom version with arugula and herby brown basmati rice topped with fritters, roasted broccoli and beets, crunchy pepitas, crispy onions, citrus pickled cabbage and red onion drizzled with a roasted garlic dressing. Air-fried sides, housemade spritzers and organic cocktails are also available. Looking to stock up on healthy foods? Gibson shelves a curated selection of her favorite allergen-free snacks and gluten-free breads. She also plans to serve housemade items, including seasonal salads and chia seed pudding, via a grab-and-go this spring.

📍 4916 Cordell Ave., Bethesda, rooted3.com



Cielo Rojo’s sunny interior

Clear Skies Ahead

Cielo Rojo, a fine-casual Mexican restaurant previously at 7056 Carroll Ave., owned and operated by Bethesda native Carolina McCandless and her husband, David Perez, reopened in a new location on the same street in January. The move expanded the restaurant’s capacity from 40 to more than 120 guests in addition to a private dining room, a 13-seat bar and a 40-seat seasonal patio. McCandless, who oversees operations, and Perez, the executive chef, fell in love with the former Austin-Healey showroom’s expansive windows, which let in abundant natural light. Custom millwork, crafted almost entirely by McCandless’ father, complements the Mexican art and minimalist lighting. Longtime fans have been pleased to find that Perez has carried over several of the former location’s beloved dishes, such as pozole rojo, a red chiles-based hominy stew garnished with chicken, avocado and herbs; quesada birria, a trio of mini quesadillas filled with braised grass-fed short ribs; and a wide selection of heirloom corn tacos filled with ingredients ranging from slow-cooked pork to tequila-infused cremini mushrooms. New menu items include an array of shareable plates, as well as chicken enchiladas topped with a trio of house-made mole sauces. Cielo Rojo is open for lunch and dinner Tuesday through Sunday, with brunch available on weekends. Stay tuned for tequila, mezcal and Mexican wine tastings this summer.

📍 7211 Carroll Ave., Takoma Park, cielo-rojo.com

Pinch of Wisdom

“Don’t be shy on the seasoning! A pinch of salt, a squeeze of lemon, a few drops of good olive oil and lots of fresh chopped herbs go a long way to making a boring dish much more delicious.”

—MATT ADLER, CHEF AND PARTNER AT CARUSO’S GROCERY IN NORTH BETHESDA



Super Bowl Noodle House closed its Rockville location in April.

The Clarks Lodge Bar & Grill, offering a variety of pasta, seafood and steaks, opened its doors in Clarksburg in April.

The restaurateurs behind the Levantine restaurant **ala** in Dupont Circle unveiled a second location in Bethesda in March.

Mason’s Famous Lobster Rolls, a national chain serving Maine lobster, is scheduled to open an outpost at Rio in Gaithersburg this spring.



FROM LEFT: PHOTO BY CAMERON WHITMAN; PHOTO BY SCOTT SUCHMAN; PHOTO BY DEB LINDSEY