

FOOD- THE DISH- The Upstairs revealed

by [DAVE MCNAIR](#), published March 20, 2008



Escafé owner Mark Brown and manager Chip Sawyer are working hard to get The Upstairs up and running.

PHOTO BY DAVE MCNAIR

In last week's Dish we revealed that **Ristorante Al Dente** on the **Mall** is moving over to the **Ix building** in **May**, and that the folks at **Escafé** are opening another restaurant in the space, called **The Upstairs**.

Escafé owner **Mark Brown** and he and manger **Chip Sawyer** recently invited us over for a tour.

Brown, who's owned the building for three years now, has essentially gutted the old Al Dente space, removing the wall board in one room to reveal some beautiful brickwork. He's also taken out the ceiling, which raises it up about six more feet and exposes two smartly designed wooden cross beams. Along the big arched windows facing the Mall, he's building a cushioned bench that will face a brand new u-shaped bar, behind which he's putting some big bucks into creating a state-of-the-art wine storage.

Armchair Historians take note: Brown says some of his older customers have always said there was a door behind one of the walls, which was rumored to be an entrance to an old brothel in the adjacent building. True? Who knows. But sure enough, when he took down the wallboard, there it was.

He's also putting in a brand new kitchen, complete with a top-of-the-line char-broiler he says is a real "kicker," and some kind of fancy machine that cooks delicacies like *fois gras*. "You can hard boil an egg so the center is like jelly," he says.

Brown says he imagines an upscale but casual bar scene, serving up high-end cognacs, scotches, and tequilas (and wine, of course), and a restaurant serving up prime USDA steaks and seafood straight from the briny deep.

As for an opening date? That's where Brown is being cautious. He expects the construction to be done in a couple of weeks, and hopes to open sometime in April or May.