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# BACK 'INN' BUSINESS

**Michael & Amanda Lordi, Jim Figueroa breathe new life into Key Colony Beach eatery**

**ALEX RICKERT**  
www.keysweekly.com

It may look (and taste) different, but the famed Key Colony Inn is set to reopen its doors in less than a month.

When Michael and Amanda Lordi returned to the Keys as newlyweds one month ago, they didn't know they'd be tasked with reimagining one of the most iconic Middle Keys eateries, shuttered since July when the previous business owners abruptly left town and later sold for \$3 million.

Already hired by new owner Jim Figueroa to open the upcoming newly-built Water's Edge restaurant along Sadowski Causeway in Key Colony Beach, they came home to an unexpected – but welcome – phone call.

"Literally the day we got back, we got a call that morning, and Jim said, 'You're gonna be a lot busier – we got Key Colony,'" said Michael.

As the Weekly sat down for an interview with the couple, the restaurant's interior was already in full reconstruction mode. The bar is shifted back, allowing for booth seating and a more open lounge feel. The old dining room furniture is already gone, and the carpet is off the ceiling, replaced by fresh paint and paneling.

The vision? Open the "Inn at Key Colony" as a true fine dining restaurant, complete with craft cocktails and powered by a from-scratch kitchen.

"Initially it was supposed to be just a turn-around, open the doors and start making money," said Michael. "But (Figueroa) took our advice, and saw that this could be something huge. This is where our passion is – more of a local thing, not \$80 dishes, but where we really take our time to make your food."



Michael and Amanda Lordi will serve as the general manager and front-of-house director, respectively, for the upcoming Inn at Key Colony. ALEX RICKERT/Keys Weekly

With rising food costs, \$10 lunches may be a thing of the past, but the Lordis said the replacement should be well worth it: a rotating Italian-centric menu featuring dishes like veal chop alla vodka and homemade pastas, for starters. And don't panic – the Inn's famed espresso martinis aren't going anywhere.

"This is where I started to really enjoy bartending," said Amanda, who worked under former Key Colony Inn owners Sergei and Lena Proudnik in 2013 before her time managing fine dining at the Plaza Grill in Marathon.

“

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She'll head up the front-of-house and bar experience at the Inn, while Michael holds down the kitchen. "Before that, I was making rum cocktails all day – this is where I really started to learn and play around with things."

"We like to travel a lot, and I travel to eat. Our honeymoon is going to Europe to go to Michelin-star restaurants – that's it," said Michael with a laugh. "Seeing the different ways that (food) can be done, I want to broaden people's horizons on food and cocktails, and open up their minds."

The Inn, located at 700 W. Ocean Drive, is tentatively set to open on Dec. 1, with dinner service beginning at 5 p.m. A second lounge menu with lighter happy hour and early bird specials starting in the early afternoon will likely come online within the following weeks, the Lordis said. The new restaurant won't initially focus on lunch service, but it's a void they hope will be filled by a spring opening of Water's Edge. With an abundance of storage and prep space, the Inn's kitchen will serve as a commissary for both restaurants, along with an upcoming convenience store and sandwich shop at the former site of Causeway Pizza.