

New Haven, Food & Drink

ROLi Opens Wednesday in Wooster Square

— Leeanne Griffin, 6.23.2025



NEW HAVEN — A stone's throw from New Haven's Little Italy and its coal-fired *apizza*, a different type of European cooking is looking to make its mark on the city. The brainchild of a Hungarian-born chef who enjoys culinary exploration, ROLi will open to the public this week at 673 Chapel Street.

The polished, comfortable restaurant is the work of classically-trained chef Roland Olah and co-owner Angela Grogan, and will feature an eclectic mix of modern European cooking in a vintage-bohemian interior. The space

features a horseshoe-style bar, a semi-open kitchen with six seats at a chef's counter, and a dining room that seats about 50 guests.



The six seat chef's counter at ROLi (CT Examiner)

Olah hails from Budapest, where he was once the executive chef at Café Erté, and came to the United States when he won a green card in a lottery, **according to his website**. In America, he worked and studied under Daniel Boulud in New York before settling in Fairfield County. His resume in Connecticut includes eight years as the executive chef of Martel Bistro & Bar in Fairfield, before he became a chef-partner at the former Bruxelles Brasserie in South Norwalk.

Olah and Grogan opted to open their own restaurant after he left Bruxelles in late 2022, taking time to find the ideal spot, which it turns out is the corner of Chapel and Olive streets in Wooster Square.

“We just love New Haven. We just thought it has a great feel and vibe to it, and good energy for what we wanted to do,” said Grogan.

They chose a modern European menu, pulling in Olah's Hungarian heritage and his training in French and Belgian cooking and along with Mediterranean, English and Irish influences. Grogan said they didn't want to

stick to just French menu, given that Olah loves to explore new styles of cooking and they wanted to complement the strong presence of Italian places on nearby Wooster Street.

“At ROLi, we’re cooking with intention. Every dish must stand on its own,” Olah said in a statement. “The menu is a reflection of what I feel — nothing on my menu is just a filler. I want each plate to either transport you or ground you. It’s about simple, honest, deeply satisfying food with no shortcuts and no rigid rules.”



Branzino served with grilled fresh corn and corn puree, bell peppers, grape tomatoes and scallions (CT Examiner)

ROLi welcomed guests to its soft opening week starting June 18, offering an variety of shared plates, chilled shellfish and seafood platters and seasonal entrees. Starters include moules frites (opening week featured a white wine

garlic butter); ricotta-stuffed squash blossoms with eggplant caponata, escargot and grilled octopus with a nduja romesco sauce, butter beans and fingerling potatoes.

Piri piri gambas feature the African-influenced Portuguese hot pepper sauce, and Mediterranean-style roasted rainbow cauliflower is served atop a cumin-cilantro yogurt dressing. Guests can also taste a bit of Olah's Hungary with gulyás (or goulash) and lángos, a popular street food of fried dough topped with grated Asiago cheese, sour cream and garlic water.

The lángos proved popular during opening week, said Grogan said, who pointed out that it was ROLi's nod to the neighborhood's pizza tradition. Guests can also opt to add prosciutto or Spanish jamón Ibérico.

Entrees are seasonal, the owners said, with the opening menu focusing on fish dishes like tuna niçoise, pan-seared salmon with a pea medley, guanciale and beurre blanc; and a summery branzino served with grilled fresh corn and corn puree, bell peppers, grape tomatoes and scallions. The steak is a take on steak frites with crispy scalloped potatoes and mushrooms. Other dishes include a braised lamb shank and roast chicken supreme with Tuscan kale, peppadew peppers and sweet potato smash. ROLi also serves a burger with Irish cheddar, onion jam and thick-cut bacon.



The dessert menu includes baked Alaska, Sacher torte layered with apricot jam and Chantilly cream, a strawberry tiramisu and sticky toffee pudding with candied pecans and fresh whipped cream.

ROLi's horseshoe-shaped bar is turning out innovative cocktails, including "gin bowls" served in European-style copa de balón (balloon glasses), several varieties of spritzes and seasonal drinks, like the mezcal-based Yuzu Daisy and a clarified milk punch with Earl Grey-infused vodka. The wine by the glass list spans the globe, with European selections joining picks from the Pacific Northwest and New Zealand.

ROLi opens to the public for dinner June 25, and will likely celebrate its official grand opening after the July 4 holiday, said Grogan. There are plans to add brunch later this summer, along with an afternoon tea, and the owners also intend to offer weekly theme nights spotlighting mussels, schnitzels, fish and chips and Hungarian cooking.

ROLi is at 673 Chapel St. in New Haven. 475-254-8492, rolinewhaven.com, [@rolinhv](https://www.instagram.com/rolinhv).

