



WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2014 / Wintry mix, 40° / Weather: P. 38 ★★

pulse *dining*

# The heart goes on

## Two NYC institutions will relaunch, but can old flames be rekindled?

**G**o on, keep teasing me, why don'tcha. Gallaghers steakhouse and Tavern on the Green, two of my old restaurant flames, said they'd reopen this week. Neither will, but they promise they'll really, truly return in just a few days more. Gallaghers had said it would reopen in December 2013, while Tavern's relaunch has been promised forever. Advice columns for singles warn that ex-sex, delicious-seeming beforehand, will



**Steve Cuzzo**  
**Free Range**

leave you miserable. But this happily married gourmand turns to jelly when it comes to restaurants I let into my heart despite advice to the contrary from my palate. I'm hot to give them a second whirl. The old Gallagher's (new owner Dean Poll has

dropped the apostrophe), classy in its 1927 speakeasy bones, served dishes left over from the Eisenhower administration. Tavern, ugly and faded down to its last chandelier, had worse food and service. Yet both were part of my New York. Their shutdowns — Tavern's at the end of 2009, Gallagher's just over a year ago — shrank my private city. Gallaghers has been brightened, modernized and partly reconfigured. The meat locker and evocative,

horse-shoe-shaped bar remain. So do the hundreds of vintage photos of athletes, showgirls and racehorses.

But new wood and upholstery replaced old. White tablecloths blow away checkerboard ones. The open kitchen's enclosed in steel-mullioned glass. A long mirror replaced a discordant color mural. The result is a familiar stranger, redolent enough to invite the wary thrill of revisiting an old paramour. Old Gallagher's 240 seats (now 200) were too many. Its USDA-prime steak fell out of favor among those who crave more exotic beef.



Hopes are high that the new owners of Gallaghers (left) and Tavern on the Green can capture the old magic.

the-top Crystal Room drew locals as well as tourists.

Jazz in the Chestnut Room, New York Film Festival opening parties and summer nights in the courtyard with its Tivoli Garden lights, washed down memories of concrete chicken. The Crystal Room is gone. New owners Jim Caiola and David Salama have kept the interior under wraps, but the 1850s buildings are gorgeous outside. Chef Katy Sparks is a master of market-driven modern-American cuisine. Now, they and Poll need to get their damn places open. And we'll see if love can thrill a second time around.

scuzzo@nypost.com