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Nawab of HHQ named chef of 26,000 s/f Food Hall at Rock Row in ME

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Westbrook, ME Award-winning chef, restaurateur, TV personality and cookbook author Akhtar Nawab and his New York based firm, Hospitality HQ (HHQ), has been chosen to oversee all management and operations of the 50-seat, 26,000 s/f Food Hall that is coming to Rock Row. Waterstone Properties, owners of the 110-acre, \$600 million Rock Row development, made the announcement.

With Greater Portland widely recognized as an international destination for culinary excellence (honors include: 2018 Restaurant City of the Year, Bon Appetit & 2020 Best in Travel—Top Regions in the World, Lonely Planet), the Rock Row Food Hall will be the only destination of its kind in the area, honoring the progressive and authentic ‘comfort based’ dining palette of the region along with Maine’s artisan craft-brew culture. The hall will feature 15 offerings and 7 spirit tasting rooms, mixing artisan dishes with live music, onsite brews and events to delight every taste.

Chef Nawab and his company, Hospitality HQ, will oversee all management and operations of the Rock Row Food Hall, from design and culinary development to day-to-day logistics and guest services. Thoughtful consideration will be given to menu planning in order to showcase the area’s strong tradition of independently-minded, locally-owned, chef-driven flavors, cuisines and experiences.

“What excites me most about the Rock Row Food Hall is the eccentric and eclectic group of vendors that we will curate for all to enjoy,” said Chef Nawab. “Greater Portland has a rich culinary offering and local food culture that is world-renowned. We want Rock Row’s Food Hall to be a foundation of that culture and a showcase for the many rising stars in the local culinary scene to grow and shine.”

Chef Nawab describes the Rock Row Food Hall as a place for “guests and chefs to be imaginative and curious” while respecting Maine’s casual and laid-back manner. A mix of local and regional culinary creators and brewers will be featured at Rock Row, thoughtfully blending a wide and exciting range of dishes and beverage pairings.

“The Food Hall will have many micro-brewery characteristics and will be inviting to all, whatever your culinary taste may be,” said Chef Nawab. “The life of the party is always in the kitchen. It’s a comfortable place where everyone is free to be themselves. With Rock Row’s Food Hall, we aim to create Maine’s kitchen...open and welcome to all.”

Hospitality HQ, where Chef Nawab serves as CEO, is the fastest-growing food hall management firm in the country, with critically-acclaimed restaurant and communal dining projects located in Brooklyn, New York (Alta Calidad), Omaha, Nebraska (Inner Rail Food Hall), New Orleans, Louisiana (Otra Vez), Chicago, Illinois (Dr. Murphy's Food Hall) and Washington, D.C. (Prather's on the Alley). Projects are also planned for Knoxville, Tennessee (Marble City Market; August, 2020), Houston, Texas (Lyric Market; December, 2020) and more to be announced. Chef Nawab has deep experience and passion for food halls, owning locations at Gotham West in Hell's Kitchen, New York, and ATCQ at Time Out Market, New York.

As the name implies, Chef Nawab's HHQ is dedicated to providing high quality hospitality at all levels, prioritizing the comfort, security and wellbeing of their guests as well as their vendors and staff. The company and chef were featured on CBS Sunday Morning for the culinary and cultural diversity they have achieved at their food halls and restaurants across the country.

"Chef Nawab's extraordinary culinary and design talents will come to life in a food hall experience that will be unlike any other in America," said Josh Levy, founding partner of Waterstone Properties. "We are honoring food and the joy it brings to lives. From an exclusive chef-inspired dish to the best pastry you've ever tasted, Chef Nawab's 'less is more' philosophy will create a destination that you can savor every day, in a different way—all in a fun, eclectic environment that's as enjoyable as the food."

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