



CHRISSA VENTRELLE

Tips Included

Mojitos could give Alameda its mojo back

THE ALAMEDA restaurant scene has been running a little flatfooted lately. The opening of **Havana** on Park Street early next month may keep the town's foodies on their toes. This is the second Havana location for owner **Zachary Scott**. The first, in Walnut Creek, is still on the saucy side after five years in business.

Scott opened the original Havana with **Jeff Dudum**, who has gone on to open a string of restaurants, including **Bing Crosby's** and **McCovey's**. (The newest Dudum venture, **Maria, Maria**, opened Monday in Walnut Creek.)

Havana replaces **Emerald Garden** at the corner of Park and Webb, just a couple of blocks from popular **Pappo** and the cineplex opening next year. "We are excited to be the new restaurant in town. Plus, we are offering something different for Alameda," says Scott.

The menu, overseen by executive chef **Paul Jellison**, will be the same as in Walnut Creek. Scott calls it "California Cuban." "The flavors are very familiar, fun, but simple," he says. The most popular menu items are the chimichurri skirt steak, the plantain crusted halibut and the garlic studded pork tenderloin. The drink of choice is, of course, the mojito.

In Alameda, the interior aims for a Miami flair with concrete floors and a bright color scheme with sea blues and lime greens. Giant photos of Cuban life cover the walls.

Scott knows the tumultuous nature of the restaurant world, but loves it anyway. "You give it all your time, all your money, all your efforts, and hope you

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SUSAN TRIPP POLLARD/TIMES

HAVANA in Walnut Creek built its reputation on the mojito. Now the party's moving to Alameda.

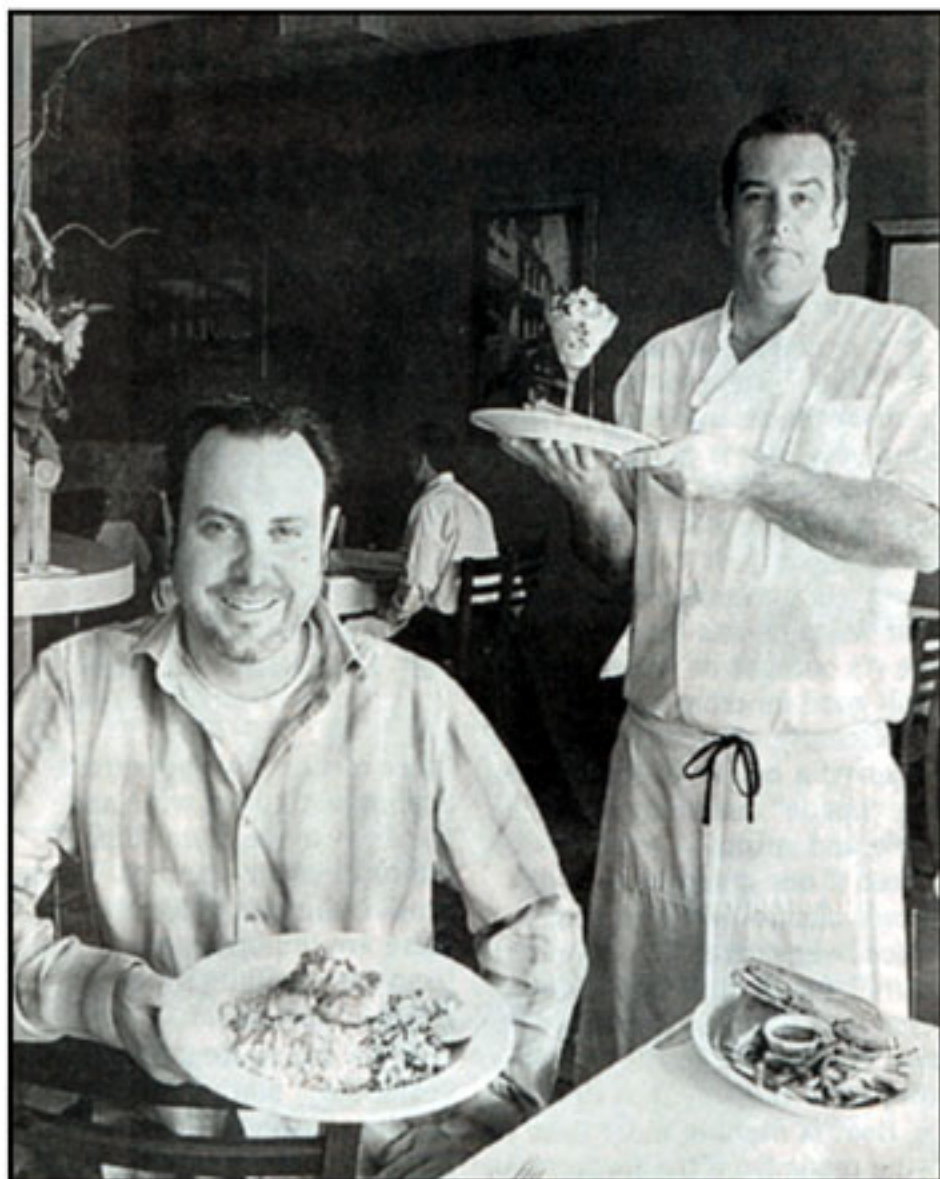
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might get lucky," he says. Scott once managed a **California Pizza Kitchen** and he grew up knee-deep in fondue, as his parents owned the **Melting Pot** in Walnut Creek.

Surprisingly, Scott has yet to make it to Cuba. He tried to get there once on a trip to Mexico, but the plan fell through.

Havana, 1518 Park St., Alameda, www.havanarestaurant.net.



SUSAN TRIPP POLLARD/STAFF

ZACHARY SCOTT, left, is bringing his Cuban cuisine formula ("familiar, fun, but simple"), refined by chef Paul Jellison, to Alameda.