

Italian restaurant shut down on Valentine's Day

February 24, 2020



Bellanotte, an Italian restaurant in downtown Crescent City, was closed down on Friday, Feb. 14, due to unsanitary food conditions after only seven months of business.

It was Valentine's night, and Bellanotte had advertised on social media a special steak and lobster dinner. However, before the dinner date rush, turmoil broke out in the kitchen.

Jim Hamilton, the property manager, received a text at around 5 p.m. from that night's cook, saying the restaurant owner was making him serve rotten steaks.

"I told the cook, 'Do not serve them. Do not serve the steaks. Drop them on the floor. Do whatever you can, and do not serve them. I would be down shortly,'" Hamilton said.

When he arrived, he halted the kitchen operations and stopped all food from being served to customers, including a couple of grilled steaks ready to be brought out.

"I said 'absolutely not.' I had the chef open up a steak and let me smell it. It was rancid. It was rotten," he said.

Hamilton then called the police to the scene. Crescent City Police Chief Richard Griffin arrived at around 5:30 p.m. to find roughly 15 former employees also complaining about prior food safety issues. The restaurant owner had gone through over 35 employees in 7 months, according to Hamilton.

The police called in the county public health department who then inspected the food and the building, finding rat droppings on top of the walk-in cooler.

The food and the kitchen were deemed unsuitable for service, and the restaurant was closed. Bellanotte opened July 2, 2019.

Now, having dissolved his deal with the restaurant owner, Hamilton says he is taking over, and once the building is clean, he plans to open a new restaurant.

“I am gonna put a new person into the restaurant, and I’m gonna clean everything up myself and have it ready and inspected by the health department on everything that they’ve asked me to do,” he said.

The Triplicate has reached out to the public health department and is awaiting their response with more information.