

There's a new crab cake in town

By CHRISTINA MITCHELL

Courier-Post Staff

Keith Meloni is taking on Bobby Chez in the realm of crab cakes.

The co-owner of Back Bay Seafood Restaurant in Stone Harbor will open a second takeout in Haddon Township, subleasing from Cabana's Water Ice on Haddon Avenue. Expect an October opening.

A confident Meloni is well aware of Bobby Chez -- who isn't? -- but the Pennsauken resident says his cakes are nonetheless "unique," with a mix of jumbo lump and blue crab claw meat -- the latter giving the cake its crab flavor -- mayo and herbs.

"Our crab cakes are broiled, not deep fried," says Meloni, whose full-time job is director of food and nutrition for Pennsauken schools. He and partner Tom Hegyvari, former owner of Tommy's takeout at Brace Road and Route 561 in Cherry Hill, tinkered with a recipe from the Back Bay's former owner and added their own touches.

The crab cakes sell for \$8.50 at the shore; Meloni expects to charge between \$7 and \$7.50 in Haddon Township. His menu also includes stuffed shrimp and flounder, ribs and filet mignon.

Back Bay offers shipping year 'round and catering. Call (609) 368-2022 or go to backbayseafood.net.

Light bites: The P.J. Whelihan's chain continues to grow. It added yet another property in South Jersey with Thursday's soft opening of Seafood Shack, formerly Inn on the Avenue in Haddon Township. The group will also open a patio soon at Kitchen 233, in the township's Westmont section. That follows a menu revamping that emphasizes more casual dining and mid-range prices. Next on the agenda is a new place at the former Ponderosa on Lenola Road in Maple Shade, adjacent to Whelihan's Pub . . . **The Sewell-based Venuto's Old World Pizza chain opens its first location Wednesday at 701 Mantua Pike in West Deptford. The brainchild of South Philly native Ralph Venuto, Venuto's boasts six-minute gourmet pizzas with curbside pickup available. Nine more locations are planned for South Jersey. Pizza giveaways will be part of the West Deptford grand opening noon to 2 p.m. Wednesday. Call (856) 686-4848 . . .** Kids karaoke night at The Pop Shop in Collingswood is scheduled Wednesday and Aug. 29 from 4:30 to 9 p.m. A suggested \$1 donation per song will be given to the Ritz Theatre on Oaklyn to support its children's theatre outreach program. The Pop Shop is at 729 Haddon Ave. Call (856) 869-0111 or go to www.thepopshopusa.com . . . To share restaurant news, call Christina Mitchell at (856) 317-7905, mail to her c/o Courier-Post, P.O. Box 5300, Cherry Hill NJ 08034 or e-mail cmitchell@courierpostonline.com.