

Pican Hires Designer, Plans To Open Like It's No Big Deal



A new restaurant slated for Oakland's longtime up-and-coming Uptown neighborhood extends a haughty middle finger to predictions of economic gloom and doom as it shoots for an ambitious modern Southern concept.

Designed to evoke a Southern plantation house, but serving modern, California-inspired Southern cuisine, Picán is due to open next month on the ground floor of Broadway Grand, the new condo/retail building at Broadway and, you guessed it, Grand Street.

The project is the first restaurant from Brother's Brewery co-founder Michael Leblanc, a New Orleans native. He announced this week he'll employ **San Francisco designer Tonya Bellusci** to make the 5,600 square foot, 158-seat space, "reminiscent of spacious antebellum Southern homes." It will include a 30-foot bar, high ceilings, reclaimed, 19th-century French doors, a private dining room — the whole nine. The food is modern Southern, with an emphasis on specialty bourbon.

The project might seem over-ambitious, considering the climate of economic terror that has the restaurant industry scrambling to cut costs, but we think it's a good sign. If such an unapologetically high-end venture can succeed in a traditionally slow-gentrifying town like Oakland, it may instill just the right kind of hope for other potential entrepreneurs on the fence about doing business in the Bay Area these days.

The location is pretty key — walking distance to downtown, Piedmont, and Lakeshore alike. So we'll watch this one with interest. It could be a really nice addition to the City of Oakland.