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Todd English 'Integrity Move' Abandons Plans for Il Bastardo Space

Added by **Scott Stiffler** on November 16, 2017.

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Todd English likes Chelsea, but won't be setting up shop on Seventh Ave. as long as the shuttered Il Bastardo space is associated with its "previous operators." File photo via cheftoddenglish.com.

BY WINNIE McCROY | Just months after Chelsea Now **reported** on celebrity Chef Todd English's intent to open up one of his famed food hall market concepts at 191 Seventh Ave. (near the corner of W. 21st St.), the bon vivant has quietly backed out of negotiations. The huge spot was the former site of Il Bastardo restaurant, a hotbed of police and State Liquor Authority citations for a **history of drunk and disorderly conduct** violations that stemmed from their raucous weekend brunches.

Chef English's Director of Restaurant Development, Flip Arbelaez, confided to Chelsea Now that they had planned to create their version of a neighborhood food hall with six food stalls and a florist, and felt the layout of the old Il Bastardo space was perfect. English and his team were initially very excited to find the space, which Arbelaez said was perfectly situated between

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Chelsea Market and the Penn Station corridor, so as not to compete with existing markets.

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“But when we started going through the process and doing more research, we came to find out that some of the former people were involved, and we were discouraged by it,” said Arbelaez.

“Todd and I got together about this immediately and decided that to go forward would only end up disappointing folks.”

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This 2016 photo shows the infamous boozy weekend brunch crowd that ultimately caused Il Bastardo to close its doors. Photo courtesy Council of Chelsea Block Associations.

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Apparently, Chef English and his team were not initially aware that Kristin Sollenne, a Food Network personality and wife of former Il Bastardo owner Robert Malta, would continue to be involved with the project. ©Chelseanow.com (Copyright 2017). Unauthorized use and/or duplication of this material without express and written permission from this site's author and/or owner is strictly prohibited. Excerpts may be used provided full and clear credit is given to Chelseanow.com with a link to the original content.

“We’re going to take over the lease from her, but Todd and I decided we had gone through a lot of media attention, so we respectfully called our attorney and told him to walk away,” said Arbelaez. “It was an integrity move. We did not want any association with these same owners. The worse thing we could do is put our investor’s money into play and lose it.”

“We’re looking for a different location and have investigated a few options Downtown, but it’s unfortunate we have to walk away because of the relationship with the previous operators,” he added. “Chelsea is one of those neighborhoods that you fall in love with, and it’s been hard finding another spot like that.”

Arbelaez said they have brokers out searching for new locations, but admitted that they would still be interested in 191 Seventh Ave. — if only the circumstances were different.

“If the lease were terminated and we had a second chance to go in front of the board **without Kristin Sollenne involved**, we would,” said Arbelaez.

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