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Opportunity Rises From the Ashes: Equinox Reopens

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After a destructive kitchen fire forced [Equinox](#) to close its doors for five months, the downtown restaurant has reopened with renovations to its space and menu.

As unfortunate as the disaster was, says co-owner Ellen Kassoff Gray, it gave her and her husband, Todd, the chance to make some changes they'd wanted to for years.

"When Todd and I opened almost 12 years ago, we were living on a pipe dream, pillow-talking about opening a restaurant together," she said. "We did it on a very shoestring budget. ... Now, we've changed things that we couldn't afford to change when we first opened."

The ceiling and lighting have been replaced, and the private room is now enclosed by frosted glass. Kassoff Gray hopes the changes will give the restaurant a "fresh and bright" look.

The menu has also received a makeover. In addition to long tasting menus and prix fixe dinners, there are now several more options for casual diners. New shareable plates include blue crab spring rolls, blue cheese tots and barbecued shrimp and grits; and pastas can now be ordered by the half-portion. The bar has also introduced two taps for draft beer.

Since reopening, says Kassoff Gray, business has been as good as it ever was. "You worry, as an owner, when you're closed for five months and people who've been coming for five, 10, 11 years have the opportunity to go find other restaurants — and there are so many good new restaurants around here. But as soon as we opened, the reservations just came flooding in."

She believes that's largely because the more Equinox has changed, the more it's stayed the same. "A lot of times, places can change beyond recognition and cease to be your favorite spots. We've managed to change without really changing."

» [Equinox](#), 818 Connecticut Ave. NW; 202-331-8118. (*Farragut West*)

Written by Express contributor Suemedha Sood

Photo by Xiaomei Chen/The Washington Post

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