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## WATERFRONT TO GET A BIG SERVING OF STAR POWER

By Casey Ross and Callum Borchers  
GLOBE STAFF

**B**arbara Lynch has her prune-infused gnocchi. Ming Tsai is known for his garlic black pepper lobster. But it might be Mario Batali's pizza that certifies Boston's rise to the top tier of the culinary world.

Batali, an internationally acclaimed chef with more than 20 restaurants worldwide, has

committed to opening his first Boston restaurant at Fan Pier in the city's waterfront Innovation District, where he will serve wood-fired pizza and pastas.

The 8,700-square-foot establishment, to be called Babbo Pizzeria, will bring another level of celebrity clout to Boston's vibrant restaurant scene. It will also add to the cachet of a fast-growing neighborhood that is rapidly emerging as a mecca for not only some of the city's best-

known restaurateurs but for the hordes of diners who covet their food.

"He's the first crazy-famous household name to come to Boston," said Jason Santos, executive chef at Blue Inc. and runner-up on season seven of the Fox television reality series "Hell's Kitchen." "The bigger the better, and the more the better."

Lydia Shire, chef and co-owner of Scampo in  
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## Batali to deliver big serving of star power to waterfront

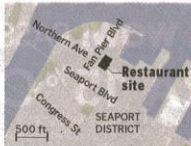
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the Liberty Hotel, said Batali brings "a world-class city jolt" that could provide a boost to others on the waterfront.

While less formal than Batali's signature restaurant, Babbo Ristorante in New York City, his Fan Pier business will hardly be a checkered-tablecloth pizza shop. It will feature three bars — one each for cocktails, pizza, and antipasti — as well as an expansive patio and private dining space for large parties.

"We're embracing the openness and brightness of the space but paying careful attention to construct beautiful, distinct, and comfortable zones within the light-filled room," Batali said in an e-mail to the Globe.

Batali scouted real estate in the city for several years before picking a site on the ground floor of Eleven Fan Pier Boulevard, in one of two office buildings occupied by Vertex Pharmaceuticals Inc. Construction is expected to begin within the



JAMES ABUNDIS/GLOBE STAFF

next few weeks, with an opening planned by the end of the year.

"In terms of business activity and visibility, Boston is a vibrant and very significant market," Batali said.

His decision to locate in the Innovation District is a major boost to the waterfront neighborhood in general and to Fan Pier specifically. Developed by Joseph F. Fallon, the 23-acre project is one of the largest privately funded construction jobs in the country, attracting an array of companies and restaurants.

But Batali, who runs B&B Hospitality with restaurateur Joe Bastianich, is the biggest retail name to sign on. In addition

to a wide range of restaurants around the world, his company operates the popular Eataly food markets in Chicago and New York (He has looked for, but not yet found, a location for Eataly in Boston.) Batali is also a star on cable television's Food Network and his main Twitter feed has more than 627,000 followers.

Babbo Pizzeria will be adjacent to 22 Liberty, a 111-unit luxury condominium building under construction by Fallon that will feature the first waterfront homes for sale in the Innovation District. Real estate specialists said the addition of a Batali restaurant will help sell those units along with the other residences and commercial spaces planned for Fan Pier and the neighborhood.

"This really gives credibility to the area," said Michael Tesler, partner at Retail Concepts Inc. a Norwell-based strategy and marketing firm. "The city's retail and food and culture have always been focused on the Back Bay and Beacon Hill, but now it's trending in the di-



JEMAL COUNTESS/GETTY IMAGES/FILE 2010

Mario Batali will open Babbo Pizzeria on the Boston waterfront with three bars: one each for cocktails, pizza, and antipasti. The renowned chef owns more than 20 restaurants.

rection of the Innovation District and Fort Point. That's great for the city."

In the last few years, the waterfront has attracted several new restaurants, some of them operated by the city's most prominent chefs. Lynch was a pioneer in the area when she opened Drink, Sportello, and Menton. Tsai followed her lead with Blue Dragon. Nearby Liberty Wharf has also attracted several new restaurants, including the multilevel Legal Harborside.

Batali, who talks business almost as much as food, said he was attracted to the Innovation District by its transportation connections and the rapid development that has transformed it from a relative backwater to a bustling part of town that in many ways epitomizes Boston's future.

"The area has already exhibited the critical mass necessary for the restaurant to thrive," Batali said. "We think there's a solid foundation there."

In culinary circles, Boston's

reputation has been on the rise for some time. Multiple James Beard Award winners — including Tsai, Lynch, and Jody Adams of Rialto — have restaurants here and have starred on popular TV shows.

Said Shire, who counts Batali as a friend: "You never have trouble selling out specials here, no matter how wacky. Bostonians appreciate creative, seasonal cooking."

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