

Latin American Wine Bar to Replace Petworth Store Accused of Selling Synthetic Drugs

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In July, local neighborhood blog Petworth News wondered, “What’s next for the Riyadh Market?” which it described as “the inconvenience store at the corner of 8th and Upshur” streets NW. Riyadh had earned the title for allegedly selling synthetic drugs; it’s consequently being forced to close by Nov. 13.

We now have an answer. **Justin Logan**, director of foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute—the libertarian think tank headquartered in D.C.—will open a Latin American “wine and spirits bar” with his wife **Jessica** and an investor, **Michelle Rodriguez**, once Riyadh Market clears out.

Though the Logans have yet to decide on a chef or the number of customers the restaurant will be able to accommodate, they do have a name: **Ruta del Vino**, Spanish for “the Wine Trail.” The restaurant will feature dishes from multiple countries, including Brazil, Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay. It’ll also serve about 20 regional wines in addition to liquors like tequila, ancho-chile, singani, and pisco. Ruta del Vino could open by next spring, at 800 Upshur St. NW.

“We sort of think there’s no great Latin place in Petworth,” says Justin, a five-year resident of the neighborhood. “There’s hunger for this kind of place, and we’re going to test the theory.”

The couple met at the Cato Institute, where Jessica worked as an accountant. (“She’s not going to let me pull anything with the books,” Justin jokes.) The Logans have never owned a small business before, but Justin says he has some restaurant experience, having worked as a server at a “pizza place” in Bethesda while an undergrad at American University. “I’ve always been attracted to restaurants,” he says.

Unlike other Latin American eateries in the District, Ruta del Vino’s menu will not be small-plates style. (“I think we may have hit peak small plate,” Justin quips. “A lot of us have suffered eating small plates and have left wondering why the bill is so high and why we’re still hungry.”) It will, however, highlight dishes that are prepared differently across countries, such as ceviche. Also meat: The Logans are thinking about chorizo and a “good asado program” as staples.

The restaurant will have a “rustic feel,” Justin adds, hopefully without being kitschy “like the big commercial winery in the *Sideways* movie.” There’ll be a bar, but “no dancing or cover charges.”

The couple hasn't yet contracted with any builders; they may partner with local stores to source ingredients like **Qualia Coffee** beans and charcuterie from **Straw Stick & Brick Delicatessen**.

As for taking over the ill-reputed Riyadh Market, Logan explains: "We thought it was a great opportunity for positive change in the area. We live here. We're raising two kids here. We really want to be deeply embedded in the community—and we're not going to sell synthetic drugs."