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New Morton's opens for lunch

Sacramento Business Journal - by Mark Anderson Staff writer

With its move to a new location at 621 Capitol Mall, the Sacramento Morton's, The Steakhouse will become one of the few restaurants in the chain of 80 Morton's that serves lunch. The lunch service starts Wednesday. Just a dozen Morton's locations serve lunch.

Morton's has been in Sacramento for 15 years, but with its move to the base of the U.S. Bank Tower, the restaurant had to nearly double its employees to 84 people to add the lunch service. The restaurant got applications from more than 1,000 people for nearly 40 positions, said Neil Swinney, general manager.

Morton's will serve lunch weekdays in its main dining room, in its new bar called 12-21 and on its open outdoor patio on Capitol Mall.

Even though the restaurant's move was literally only a few blocks, the move out of the retail environment of the downtown mall and into the ground floor of a new office tower makes a tremendous difference, said Tom Baldwin, chairman, chief executive and president of Morton's (NYSE: MRT), who is here this week for the launch of the new Morton's location.

Even before the doors were open to the restaurant, Baldwin and Swinney were looking at some potential remodeling. The new restaurant has some empty wall space, which could be used for more private wine lockers. The lockers have been sold out and there has been a waiting list since the restaurant opened. Baldwin said he sees space for about eight more of the lockers to the right of the front door. Swinney sees room for perhaps 12 more lockers between the restaurant and the bar.

The dining room of the new restaurant features a floor-to-ceiling glass wine case, which is kept between 55 degrees and 58 degrees. Wine is a serious business at the Sacramento location, Baldwin said, because the customers here are sophisticated about their wines. That might be why six of the 85 certified sommeliers in the company work in the Sacramento restaurant.