

# BOSTON BUSINESS JOURNAL

## [Downtown Boston's newest restaurant has a 55-foot bar and Chihuly sculpture](#)

By: Grant Walker | June 6, 2024



Downtown Boston's tallest tower is about to also include the neighborhood's flashiest new restaurant and bar.

Overlooking Federal Street and Winthrop Center's block-long grand lobby, the Vermilion Club is named for the reddish-orange color of the 30-foot-long Dale Chihuly sculpture that stands above the bar. The official opening is June 11.

The Vermilion Club will be the latest offering from chef and restaurateur John Fraser, who is also behind a group of Winthrop Center eateries collectively called The Lineup: Mexican

restaurant Ariana, the Mediterranean spot Iris Mezze, the burger place Big Grin, the bakery and sandwich shop Day Shift, and Gatto Pazzo, which sells pizza, sandwiches, salads and antipasti.

The Lineup opened early this year, about six months after the tower — with more than 300 condominiums and roughly 750,000 square feet of offices — first opened its doors. Though the 691-foot-tall tower isn't yet fully occupied, Fraser said The Lineup has had busy lunch crowds.

He hopes to expand that business to later in the day, particularly with the Vermilion Club, which will open with dinner hours only, later expanding to lunch, brunch and happy hours.

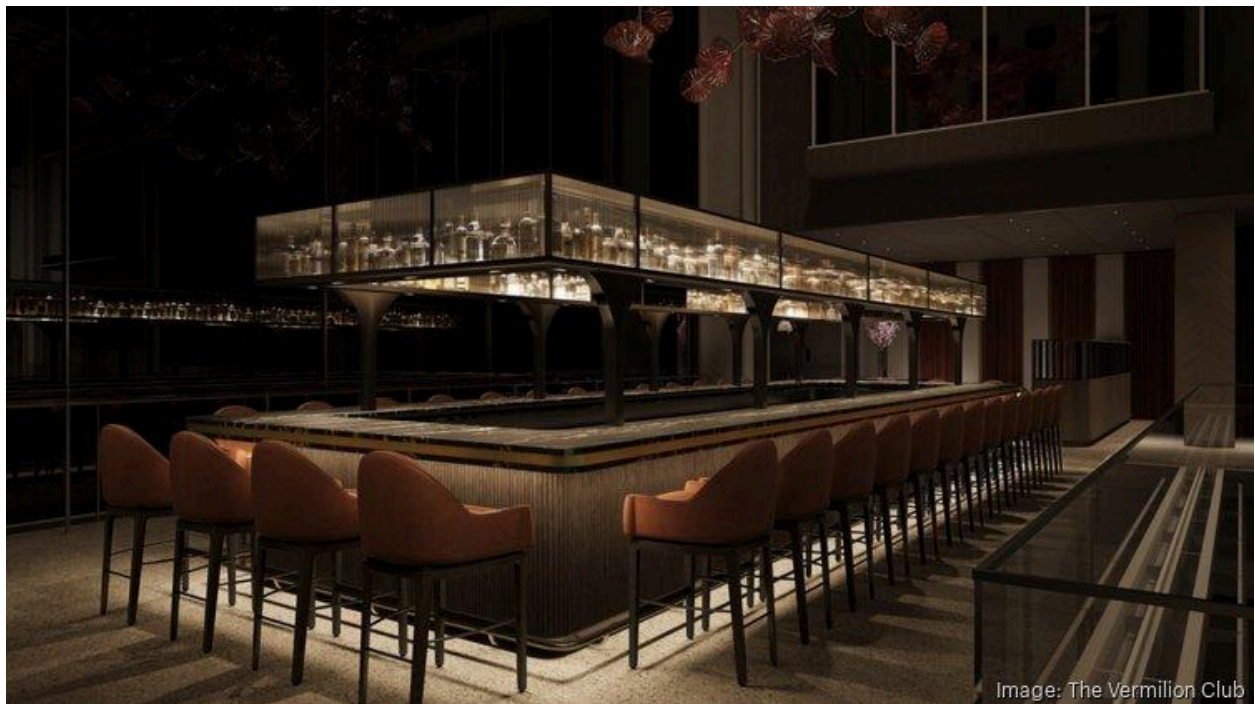


Image: The Vermilion Club

Fraser, whose JF Restaurants is based in New York, said he spent a year figuring out what kind of sit-down restaurant concept he wanted for Winthrop Center. He landed on an upscale chophouse, with a menu heavy with steak and seafood options, and a cocktail menu running 65 drinks long.

“We attached the word ‘club’ to it because we really wanted it to be a place for hanging out and enjoying the neighborhood,” Fraser said.

“There's only a couple of types of restaurants that can really be at scale this large and in this kind of presentation, and it's a chophouse,” he added.

The Vermilion Club is centered around a 55-foot-long bar below the Chihuly sculpture. Fraser was involved in planning everything from the design and name to lighting, music and staff uniforms.

“It’s not just cooking,” Fraser, a Michelin-starred chef, said of considering such details. Fraser said he enjoys the involvement in so many aspects — “everything but social media,” he said.



“I think most creative people, the way they express themselves is usually not just one thing,” Fraser said. “For us, it’s one part control freak and one part giving a full experience. I started as a cook and I climbed my way up to restaurateur by wanting to express myself all the way through the guest experience.”

As for The Lineup down on the first floor, it could also change. Fraser said he designed the five eateries to be adjustable to new concepts, including with a flexible kitchen set-up. He’s confident in the neighborhood, despite how much quieter it is on weekdays compared to before the pandemic and when construction on the tower was already underway, when office workers were almost always in five days a week.

“I think people are going to start going in on Mondays and Fridays, and then at a certain point, I think they’re going to go back to normal,” he said of office work patterns. “Maybe not fully, but there’s going to be a sense of normalcy with a five-day workweek in offices and I think that’s going to work well for us.”