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## Iconic Boca restaurant ranked #6 out of 636 on TripAdvisor changes hands: What we know

By Diana Biederman, Palm Beach Post, 12 hours ago



Max's Grille, the iconic Mizner Park restaurant open since 1991 when the plaza debuted, has changed hands for a second time.

The new owner as of Dec. 2 is Arka Restaurant Group, owned and operated by David Baldwin. It is best known for three Florida locations of Kaluz, including one in Wellington, which earned a No. 18 ranking on Yelp's 25 Best Palm Beach County Restaurants in October.

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Tactile touches, including booths and tabletop items, may be upgraded, Baldwin said.

“Our goal is to use what they have and improve where we can,” Baldwin said.

Jeff Sussman, who has brokered nearly 20 restaurant deals at Mizner Park and represented Max's former owners Rapoport and BBX in the transaction, echoed that sentiment, describing the restaurant's legacy as a beloved Boca institution.

“It's the true definition of an institution because of its long history and continued dedicated clientele over the years, attracting generation after generation of families,” Sussman said.

“The new buyers totally get that. They're great operators.”

There is one tiny change Sussman would like to see: a menu addition of Kaluz's famous ribs.

With locations also in Fort Lauderdale and Plantation, Kaluz has been a Florida force for 12 years and a fourth location in Pembroke Pines is planned for 2025.

Max's Grille will be Arka's fourth restaurant.

“We have an opportunity for a second brand with a great spot in a great market. You can't really get more Boca Raton than Mizner Park,” Baldwin said over the phone.

Baldwin said the main commonality between Max's Grille and Kaluz is high standards.

When the innovative Max's Grille came on the market, it was an easy decision to acquire this chef-driven spot, Baldwin said.

Max's Grille's first ownership change was in 2018, when co-founder Dennis Max, acclaimed for bringing the California cuisine concept to South Florida, stepped away.

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# Max's Grille: A timeline

**1991** : Max's Grille opens. It's named for founder Dennis Max. The concept was a first for Boca and much of Florida: California's culinary culture where premium ingredients play a starring role on the menu as made famous by chefs Jeremiah Tower, Alice Waters and Wolfgang Puck.

Among the original Mizner Park restaurants, it made that spot quite the destination.

A stroll through the Post's archives notes the concept expanded to other cities, including Palm Beach Gardens, which saw another Max's Grille open in 2005; it closed in 2007.

**2018** : Max, then 72, stepped away in the first ownership change. Then-business partner Burt Rapoport and BBX Capital Corp., a Fort Lauderdale-based holding company that became the restaurant's majority owner, took over. In 2019, the restaurant underwent a makeover before its 30th anniversary.

**2024** : The restaurant was acquired by David Baldwin's Arka Restaurant Group on Dec. 2.

*This article originally appeared on Palm Beach Post: Iconic Boca restaurant ranked #6 out of 636 on TripAdvisor changes hands: What we know*

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