

# Bloomingtondale Business

BY AMANDA ABRAMS

## A New Offering at Timor Bodega

The little turquoise shop on Rhode Island Avenue is some Bloomingdale residents' pride and joy. Located right in their neighborhood, Timor Bodega is a store that folks can drop in for quality ingredients, say a quick "hi" to the familiar faces there, and maybe pet a dog on the head before heading out again. Some say it's just what the neighborhood needed.

The owner, Kim Wee, has been in the spot for two years. A native of Singapore and a former foreign affairs wonk, he worked at the World Bank for several years before starting his businesses. There's the bodega, which features a broad selection of wine, beer and natural sodas, as well as dairy products from Trickling Springs Creamery (located in Chambersburg, Penn.), locally grown produce and a variety of organic dry goods. Oh, and bagels from Gaithersburg's Whatsa bagel. He also runs a doggie day care service, boarding pets for a 12-hour day for \$25; sometimes the pups make guest appearances at the shop.

Wee, who's quiet but friendly and might reward you with a shy smile if you're persistent, just started a new service last month: produce boxes. It seems like a great deal. For \$60 a month (add \$6 for delivery, available only within the neighborhood), subscribers get a weekly box of winter produce. That might mean turnips, beets, collards, kale – the usual winter vegetables, but the bonus here is that they're all locally grown on a farm in nearby Stafford, Va. (near Fredericksburg).

Wee meets the farmer at the US Department of Agriculture farmers' market, one of the only ones in the city that continues year-round, and purchases whatever she's selling that week. Incredibly, she also has greenhouse-grown tomatoes, cucumbers and cilantro. "I don't know of any other place where you can get

greenhouse tomatoes this time of year," said Wee. "They pick it kind of green, but it still tastes better [than supermarket tomatoes]; they don't have that summertime smell, but texturally they're perfectly fine."

So far, Wee's got 40 subscribers. He still seems to be experimenting: this month, he's including a small loaf of dark bread in the box, as well as apples and pears.

I dropped by on a recent Saturday afternoon to check out the store. I'd heard about Timor on neighborhood blogs but wasn't sure what to expect. The store was busy with a steady stream of customers who all seemed familiar with Wee. Most greeted him as they entered, and some also said hello to the dog by his side, a golden-brown beauty named Chloe who was missing one leg; Wee was looking after her for the day.

Anna John and Gautham Nagesh, Columbia Heights residents, came all the way down to Bloomingdale to buy several bars of handmade soap made by Union Street Soapworks (Millersville, Md.). "I'm obsessed with this soap, you don't understand," said John, emphasizing that her skin is very sensitive, and this is the only soap that really works well.

But they're fans of the store in general. "Pretty much everything here's good," Nagesh told me.

A few minutes later, Vicki Gross and Tuckerbear, a white cockerpoo, breezed in. Gross and Tuckerbear live in nearby Eckington, at Second and R streets NE. She eagerly sang the store's praises, too. "Kim and Face" – that's Kim's employee – "are always nice and accommodating," gushed Gross as she brought her purchases to the checkout counter. "The wine and beer selection is terrific; they have the BEST yogurt and great ice cream. And the best bagels in the world! It's a great store."

Tallying her purchases, Wee



Timor Bodega's exterior advertises its interior contents. Photo: Amanda Abrams

smiled shyly in response, but didn't say a word.

Timor Bodega is located at 200 Rhode Island Ave. NW. For more information on the produce boxes, e-mail [kim.wee.dc@gmail.com](mailto:kim.wee.dc@gmail.com) or call 202-588-5612.

## Big Hopes for a Bloomingdale Bar

The Prince of Petworth blog had a big scoop for Bloomingdale residents in late January: the neighborhood is slated to be getting a bar ... at some point. Diton Pashaj, who owns Vinoteca on U Street, is hoping to open Rustik Neighborhood Tavern in Bloomingdale's little business district on First Street just south of Rhode Island Avenue. Pashaj is saying the place will offer everything a neighborhood pub needs – outdoor seating, brunch, a jukebox, you name it. Commenters on the PoP blog post were so excited, one of them already offered to be Norm (a la "Cheers," the TV show).

But there's a little hitch – that "at some point" time frame. Things don't necessarily move fast in the neighborhood. Residents have already been holding their collective

breath for months now, awaiting the opening – or the end of construction, or signs of life, even – of Baraki Pizza at the corner of First and T streets. Owner Aleks Duni finally triumphed over roadblocks to getting the necessary permits, but now he says no one's lending: "We'll move forward as soon as Obama and the banks decide to allow me to get a loan."

He's not the only one with that problem. About the bar, John Salatti, one of the neighborhood's advisory neighborhood commissioners, told me, "I'll believe it when I see it." Then he described, point by point, the various potential businesses whose development has stalled. An Italian restaurant, an upscale carryout place ... all great plans that have been thwarted by the recession. "Trying to get things to fruition because of the economy is a challenge," sighed Salatti.

I called Pashaj directly to hear his thoughts about moving into Bloomingdale. But even he was remarkably cautious. He admitted he'd been looking to open something in the area for the past year and a half, but that's all he'd say. "I don't want to