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Kate Stamas and Evan Stark serve up food at Hometown Bar-B-Que in Red Hook. / BESS ADLER, METRO

Eateries in Red Hook on the rebound

Anniversary.

When superstorm Sandy waylaid Red Hook, some new restaurants dug in and decided to stay in the community.

Special place

Despite the threat of flooding, the growing artisanal community of glassblowers, pie makers and craft bars lure entrepreneurs to the area. Steve Mierisch considered spaces in Williamsburg, Bushwick and DUMBO, but chose Red

Hook for the existing network of small businesses.

- "It's a good vibe in the neighborhood," he said. "It's like going to a small town upstate and you're only five minutes from the city."

Tough residents

"There's a special breed of human being that comes to Red Hook to open a business."

Billy Durney

It's Thursday — typically a slow day for restaurants — but nearly every table in Billy Durney's 4,500-square-foot barbecue hall Hometown is packed. Even 1.5 miles from the nearest subway, New Yorkers seem drawn to Durney.

That's because after superstorm Sandy hit his Red Hook restaurant two months into its build-out, Durney smoked nearly 4,000 pounds of donated meat and fed his neighbors for 16 days.

"I fell hook, line and sinker for every single person in this community," Durney said.

The storm, for better or worse, forced the handful of food businesses that signed leases in Red Hook just before Sandy to become invested in the neighborhood.

Many establishments lost as much as \$100,000

because the flood damaged essential kitchen appliances and food inventory. But leaving Red Hook was not an option for these restaurants given their financial investment in their space.

According to Monica Byrne, a co-founder of Restore Red Hook and a local business owner, most developments in the seaside neighborhood are less than 10 years old and the owners personally financed their ventures.

"These are not Whar-

ton School of Business plans, but they're going to put their hearts and souls into it," she said.

Steve Mierisch, owner of a coffee-roasting incubator called Pulley Collective, signed his lease three weeks before the storm. He lost about 30 bags of green coffee beans and a roaster — much less than his neighbors at Mile End Delicatessen and Red Hook Winery — but damages to the building caused a five-month delay in opening his roasting business.

Durney wasn't so fortunate. He lost nearly \$50,000 of kitchen and construction equipment in 5.5 feet of water.

"Anything can happen when you're this close to the ocean," he said.

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