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### Restaurant News

## Openings & Closings

By Katharine Shilcutt, Fri., Nov. 5 2010 @ 3:00PM

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Photo by Craig Hlavaty

So long, Agora...for now.

Filed under "O" for obvious is the closing this week of **Agora** (1712 Westheimer) after last weekend's devastating fire on the eve of Halloween. For those of you just tuning in, Agora's next door neighbor -- Antique Warehouse -- caught fire and the flames quickly spread to the two-story restaurant and bar. Photos from [the fire itself](#) and [the aftermath](#) show the roof of Agora to be mostly gone and serious fire and water damage on the side that faced Antique Warehouse. It's not yet known how long it will take the restaurant to rebuild.

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In other closings, **Fins** (2810 Westheimer) has shut its doors after less than a year in business. The restaurant had already built a reputation for delicious dishes like salt & pepper shrimp, but couldn't stay afloat in the tough economic times that are beginning to hit Houston even harder these days.



Piola attempts to bring "true" Italian food to Midtown.

In brighter news, several new concepts have opened around the city over the past few weeks. One is an import from Canada, which has chosen Houston as its first Texas-based location: **Teriyaki Experience** (9774 Katy Freeway). At the restaurant, a teppanyaki griddle is used to prepare your food in less than three minutes, right there in front of you. The menu features a selection of rice and noodle meals, soups, wraps, salads and sushi. And there's good news for those concerned that the glut of restaurants at the corner of Bunker Hill and I-10 is all fatty fast food: Most menu items have less than 10 grams of fat and contain less than 600 calories.

Sushi Raku now has a new neighbor in Midtown besides a hair salon and a gym: **Piola** (3201 Louisiana), a pizzeria and fast-casual Italian restaurant from Treviso, Italy. In addition to its many Italian and other international locations, Piola also has chains in nine other U.S. cities. Like Teriyaki Experience, this Houston branch is the chain's first venture into Texas. Local franchise owner Bruno Cencini says, "We are very much looking forward to offering our customer a genuine Italian dining experience in a very dynamic and friendly environment." To that end, the restaurant is making thin-crust, wood-fired brick oven pizzas as well as a selection of fresh made salads, carpacci, salads, Italian pastas and homemade desserts. Pizza fanatics, you have a fresh victim to pick apart. Who will be the first to report back on the stuff?

Those people accustomed to driving past the ancient Chicken 'N Egg Roll on Shepherd should be pleasantly surprised to see the brand-spanking-new **Toyama** (2802 S. Shepherd) in its place now. The Japanese restaurant opened quietly a few weeks ago in a chic new buildout that matches the simplicity of its menu. Items like chawanmushi, ramen, katsu don and -- of course -- sushi are on the list alongside lunch specials every Monday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Toyama also offers sake flights starting at \$9, so you know I'll be hitting it up sooner rather than later.

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