

New Amsterdam's Robert La Valva Talks Cake and Vendors

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Among the many matters that Robert LaValva must attend to before his New Amsterdam Market [returns](#) to the South Street Seaport next month is that of cake. Specifically, the kind of cake that may or may not be sold at the stand run by [Saltie's](#), the new bakery from Marlow and Sons' former chef, Caroline Fidanza.

It's a detail that may seem relatively insignificant, but as LaValva explains, it's one that comes with historical considerations. New Amsterdam, he says, is modeled on 19th-century public markets, and "one of the things they used to have was a cake or coffee stand. They were almost like a charity -- they granted people, like widows or poor people, the right to sell in a public market with a guaranteed audience. We're taking from that the notion of treating something like a baked good as a treat, not something to be consumed mindlessly."

With that in mind, he and Fidanza are thinking along the lines of something "unusual, that relates to the experience of the market and seasons and using good-quality ingredients -- something not overly sweet." Despite repeated requests, "there will be no cupcakes." And aside from the Saltie's stand, he adds, there will be no baked goods besides bread in the market.

What there will be is more new vendors. So far, there are about 60 confirmed new and returning vendors, LaValva says; in addition to market stalwarts such as Saxelby Cheesemongers, Dickson's Farmstead Meats, and Pain d'Avignon Bakery, visitors will see new cheesemakers like [Polymeadows](#) goat farm and creamery, from Vermont, and New York's [Beekman 1802](#), as well as [Hudson Valley Fresh](#), the upstate milk cooperative.

The market, LaValva adds, is a "work in progress. Obviously, our goal is to create something permanent and very year-round. Whether it's open every day or weekend is hard to predict -- it's very much an incremental process." That said, don't expect a weekly market, which, LaValva says, would be too much for all of the vendors to handle.

As for whether or not the market will return next year, LaValva can't yet make firm predictions. "I really don't want to have any distinct or specific plans that aren't based on a working knowledge of how well things do," he says. "I'm fortunate with a project like this, because the market by nature can be variable and changeable -- it doesn't have to be set in stone."

Unless, of course, you're talking about cupcakes.