

# Noma restaurant to reopen for first time since abuse claims

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*Nordic correspondent*

The Copenhagen restaurant Noma – often ranked among the world's best – is preparing to reopen next week under new leadership for the first time since its star chef and co-founder, René Redzepi, stepped down amid accusations of physical and psychological abuse.

The new executive head chef, Pablo Soto, who has worked at the restaurant for nearly a decade, said that while it remained “the same Noma” there had been some significant changes. Along with a new, evolving monthly menu to replace its previous seasonal one, he said there was now a heightened focus on enabling employees to live full lives.

Redzepi, who has apologised to “those who have suffered under my leadership”, is no longer involved in the restaurant's day-to-day management, but Soto said he will still have a creative influence.

Since storming the culinary establishment in 2003, Noma has been ranked the world's best restaurant five times and been awarded three Michelin stars, reinventing itself several times in the Danish capital and at pop-ups around the world.

But this year, as it launched a pop-up in Los Angeles, the entire organisation threatened to come crashing down after Redzepi was accused of creating abusive working conditions – including punching, screaming and public shaming – between 2009 and 2017. One of dozens of former employees who spoke to the New York Times said “going to work felt like going to war”.

Redzepi said in response: “Although I don't recognise all details in these stories, I can see enough of my past behaviour reflected in them to understand that my actions were



*Berry gazpacho, one of Noma's latest creations*

harmful to people who worked with me. To those who have suffered under my leadership, my bad judgment, or my anger, I am deeply sorry and I have worked to change.”

A few days later, amid global media scrutiny, Redzepi announced he would “step away” from the restaurant and that he had resigned from his nonprofit, MAD.

When Noma reopens in the Danish capital on Wednesday, it will face one of its biggest tests yet without Redzepi at the helm.

◀ *A chef in the test kitchen shows off an exquisitely presented fish dish as below, the team brainstorm ideas*

PHOTOGRAPHS: JAMES BROOKS/AP



Taking a break from intense final preparations, Soto said: “It's the same Noma. We are simply back home – that is what is different.”

Before the allegations against Redzepi, Noma had planned to turn its Copenhagen restaurant, which closed in 2024, into a food laboratory. But after the international fallout, the decision has been made to reopen it.

“After Los Angeles, the best thing, in my opinion, was to come back to something stable – our beautiful restaurant,” Soto told the Guardian.

There have been moments in recent months where he feared for Noma's future, he said. But Soto is now adamant it could regain its best-in-world status. “The team that has done it for so many years is still here. And that's the number one marker of confidence right now,” he said.

Responsibility for daily operations is now in the hands of Soto, the chief executive, Annika de Las Heras, and Mette Brink Soborg, the head of research and development, with Redzepi turning his attention to creative projects. “That doesn't mean he is banished from his company. We actually want his input,” said Soto.

He insisted he was “not stepping into René's former role”, adding: “This is still his restaurant. He is now simply moving to the side to continue on other creative ventures.”

When Noma reopens, the 4,500 DKK (about £515) per head menu will focus on what is available during that specific time of year, replacing its previous model where the restaurant revolved around three seasons: seafood in the winter, vegetables in spring and summer, and forest and game in the autumn.

“It's a menu that is dynamic, that can change day to day in many ways,” said Soto. Initially the restaurant will work with ingredients such as berries, flowers, vegetables and sweet seafood, moving on by October to wild mushrooms, game, stone fruits and red shellfish.

Soto also plans to prioritise ensuring its staff of about 100 are able to live full lives outside work, including having children, pets and hobbies. “This is nothing new, but is definitely something that is a priority, that people can continue their lives and continue to be at work,” he said.