

Gloria Estefan's Costa d'Este Beach Resort sets mid-June opening in Vero Beach

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VERO BEACH — Costa d'Este Beach Resort is finally about to get on its feet.

Grammy Award-winning singer Gloria Estefan and her husband producer Emilio Estefan Jr.'s new luxury hotel is scheduled to open in mid-June, company executives announced Thursday.

The hotel's management held a special press event in New York City Wednesday to introduce the oceanside resort to national and international consumer and trade travel magazines.

"Overall it's nice to bring the spotlight to the hotel, but we also want to spotlight the City of Vero Beach because it's such a great destination," said Andrew Zinni, general manager for Costa d'Este Beach Resort, in an interview Wednesday.

With plenty of room to Conga, the new the \$50-million dollar luxury resort features 94 guestrooms, including four one-bedroom suites, a signature restaurant and bar, infinity-edge swimming pool and cabana bar, full-service spa and a fitness center.

"We chose to develop a resort here because we wanted to invest in Vero Beach and think it's a quiet beach community and is the perfect distance for a weekend getaway from Miami, Fort Lauderdale, Palm Beach and Orlando," the singer, who owns a home in Vero Beach, stated in an e-mail. "Emilio and I discovered Vero Beach about seven years ago and immediately fell in love with the community and the people. Once we began spending time in our home we came to appreciate the many natural attractions in the area."

Zinni said that about 70 to 80 new employees would be hired to staff the hotel.

"We're hiring through our Web site and the One-Stop Career Center in Vero Beach," Zinni said. "We've been very happy with the applicants we've received."

Costa d'Este Beach Resort is owned by the Estefans, but will be managed by Benchmark Hospitality International, which manages and markets luxury resorts

and conference centers. A soft-opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony is being planned for mid-June. A bigger grand opening would be held sometime in July.

The hotel will also house an 85-seat restaurant called the Orient. The couple have a second Oriente at their Cardozo hotel in Miami, along with three other Florida restaurants. Cuban American Chef David Rodriguez will run the local eatery.

"My favorite part of the project is Oriente because I love home cooking but I don't like to do it myself," Estefan stated. "Vero Beach has many excellent restaurants and I think our community will come to love our Cuban-fusion specialties at Oriente."

The restaurant isn't the only place that will feature the couple's personal taste. The architect and interior designer chosen for the hotel are the same team that designed the Estefan's Vero Beach home.

"I'm most excited by the architecture, with all of its recurring arches and circles," Emilio stated in the e-mail. "For example, the facade of the resort's two twin towers features bass reliefs of random patterned circles – it's gorgeous."

The hotel is already creating buzz among local business leaders.

"I think its great to bring another hotel here," said Rip Tosun, immediate-past chairman of the Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association and owner of Rip's – The Place for Ribs and Monte's restaurant, both in Vero Beach. "June is usually the slow time of year so it will draw a lot of attention and people to the area."

Lori Burns, tourism and marketing director for the Indian River Chamber of Commerce, said she recently took a tour of the hotel.

"I think it will have a wonderful future here," Burns said. "They are making every detail worthwhile, real top-notch."

The hotel has started taking reservations through December starting June 16. Zinni said that July 4th weekend is nearly booked already.

"Some dates are going a lot quicker than others," Zinni said. "We're actually a little worried about getting completely booked for that weekend."

