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Jelena Pasic scored a prime location for her soon-to-open burger joint on Lenox Ave.; the name she picked last year may turn out to be even bigger. Photo by Andrew Savulich/Daily News

Shakin' & bakin'

Burger joint scores great location, even better name

BY MICHAEL J. FEENEY
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IT'S BEEN a sweeping Internet sensation that spawned a popular dance craze. And soon, the "Harlem Shake" will be Harlem's newest burger joint.

Its owner says it's all just a stroke of luck, one that it has nothing to do with the viral dance movement that has people all over the world dancing awkwardly to an electronic song in 30-second video clips.

"It's a very lucky coincidence," said Jelena Pasic, owner of the soon-to-open burger and milkshake joint, which is expected to open in April off a stretch of Lenox Ave. that's already expecting an explosion of new activity.

The restaurant has already garnered plenty of recent attention because of the viral dance craze and a very clever advertisement.

Pasic said she came up with

the concept for Harlem Shake — the restaurant — in June; its Facebook page launched in December, and now counts more than 20,000 likes.

She said she was inspired by the original Harlem Shake, which has roots going back to the 1980s. The dance became a mainstream phenomenon in the early 2000s behind Harlem rapper G-Dep and P. Diddy, who included the dance in music videos.

"I wanted them to associate us with the real Harlem Shake before anything else," Pasic told the Daily News.

To that end, she enlisted graffiti artist Kindo Harper to paint "Do The Real Harlem Shake" on the plywood boards of the under-construction shop.

"I wanted to say, 'We need to do the real thing,'" she said.

The restaurant's name was a natural, she said, because of her plans to serve up tasty milkshakes.

"The hope is that we will sell the best burgers and shakes," said the Croatian-born shop owner. "We really want to be known for our food, primarily."

Located across from the old Lenox Lounge at the corner of W. 124th St., Pasic's place will soon sit amid a bevy of retail giants. Whole Foods, Burlington Coat Factory, Marshall's and American Eagle are all planning new addresses nearby, but Pasic wants her Harlem Shake to help preserve a bit of old-school vibe.

"We wanted to bring back the Harlem of the past," said Pasic, who used to own a coffee shop in Washington Heights and moved to Harlem in September. "All of these cool places that were the soul of the neighborhood were disappearing."

Designer Dennis Decker said the look of the restaurant — which will have outdoor sidewalk seating but no table ser-

vice — was inspired by the stools and vinyl booths that came into vogue in the 1940s.

"It's going to feel like a place that's been around for years and years," he said. The place will have one wall covered with vintage Jet magazines, and another with autographed photos that celebrate celebrities and local residents.

"We want Harlem to embrace it as its own," said Decker, a 13-year Harlem resident. "It's going to have a retro feel."

Pasic is glad people are talking about the shop before it opens, but the dance craze has presented a unique challenge. The new Harlem Shake pops up in search engines well ahead of her restaurant.

"It's going to be a long time before you can search us easily," she said, admitting she does enjoy the new videos. "Some of them are so hilarious."

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