

NEW YORK

NYC RESTAURANT NEWS

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Bruno Pizza's Landlord Is Going to Jail
Notorious slumlord Steve Croman owes \$5M in fines
by [Melissa McCart](#) | Jun 7, 2017, 2:11pm EDT



Greg Morabito

Steve Croman, the notorious slumlord and owner of **140 buildings** — including the one that houses **Bruno Pizza** in the East Village — **is going to Rikers Island for a year**. Originally charged with over 20 felonies, Croman has pleaded guilty to **three felony charges** of grand larceny, tax fraud, and another fraud charge relating to false statements.

By pleading guilty, Croman avoided jail time between 3.25 and 11 years, reports *The Real Deal*. He's also on the hook to pay \$5 million in fines with \$3 million to be paid by September.

Meanwhile, restaurants are still trying to open in Croman-owned spaces, such as an outpost of Vietnamese Whitestone restaurant

Ginger and Lemongrass slated for a \$14,000 a year Croman space at **153 Rivington**, as reported on May 30. Proprietors Petra Rickman and Michael Prelovsky **told Bowery Boogie** it was an expansion of the Queens location. Eater called to check in on the progress of the Manhattan spot and the voicemail is full, though the Queens restaurant is open, with **Yelp reviews** as recent as Monday.

Back in May of last year, Bruno Pizza **won a judgment against a petition of eviction** by Croman's company 9300 Realty with owner **Demian Repucci** reporting he was served with an eviction notice the week his restaurant opened. An unsanctioned roof deck was at issue along with the use of basement space by the landlord, both of which allegedly fell outside of the bounds of the lease that Repucci has signed. When Repucci refused to accept the modification, 9300 Realty filed the lawsuit that was eventually thrown out. Eater has reached out to Bruno and has not yet heard a response.

And several years back in 2011, **Gabrielle Hamilton** of **Prune** invested nearly \$60,000 in a Croman-owned space that was never zoned for commercial use. Despite Hamilton not being able to secure permits required to open her business, Croman refused to return the money, which the State Supreme Court **forced Croman to pay back the money in 2014**.

Attorney General Eric Schneiderman pointed to how unusual it is for a landlord to serve prison time and has referred to Croman as "the Bernie Madoff of landlords." The Stop Croman Coalition has a fascinating compilation of the six neighborhoods that house the most Croman-owned properties and the **millions and millions of dollars** he grosses from them in each neighborhood.

