



# Legacy Business Registry Staff Report

Hearing Date: July 22, 2024

## BISSAP BAOBAB

*Application No.:* LBR-2023-24-028  
*Business Name:* Bissap Baobab  
*Business Address:* 2243 Mission St.  
*District:* District 9  
*Applicant:* Kevin Ortiz, Senior Advisor  
*Nomination Date:* February 12, 2024  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Hillary Ronen  
*Staff Contact:* Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds  
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

### BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

Bissap Baobab, located at 2243 Mission Street in the heart of the Mission District, is primarily a Senegalese restaurant and a global entertainment venue. It's a unique establishment blending dining, culture, lively music, and entertainment. It offers an array of dishes that reflect French West African culture. The venue is known for its vibrant Latin and Afrobeat events on some nights, and hosts international performances monthly. Bissap Baobab is infused with the concept of 'Teranga' – a Senegalese term for hospitality – and the business strives to create a welcoming, multicultural atmosphere.

When he first came to the United States, owner and operator of Bissap Baobab, Marco Senghor, started making and bottling his own ginger juice out of a small catering kitchen on 19th Street; this would eventually be the home and beginnings of Bissap Baobab – a cornerstone of the Mission District community. Originally "Little Baobab" in 1998, this business has been held as a breakout space for local artists, looking for spaces, venues, and gigs to share their art. The business has sponsored and donated time and resources to community-based organizations including happy hours, catering, fundraisers, memorials, and funds to these organizations as well as local events.

Bissap Baobab regularly holds a wide variety of international musical events and performances including salsa, bachata, reggaeton, cumbia, Balkan, Afrobeats, Bollywood tunes, Flamenco, movie screenings, book readings, Spanish and French meet-ups and much more. The venue is considered widely as one of the first places to host Afrobeat events, creating a large significant gathering space for the African community. For its contributions to the Mission District community, Bissap Baobab and its owner, Marco Senghor, have been awarded multiple awards by various offices such as State Assemblymember: Phil Ting; Assessor-Recorder: Joaquin Torres; State Assemblymember: Carol Migden; and Board of Supervisors: Myrna Melgar and Matt Haney.

### CRITERION 1

**Has the applicant operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?**

No, the applicant has not operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years.

3386 19th St. from 1998 to 2022 (24 years)  
2323 Mission St. from 2000 to 2008 (8 years)  
3372 19th St. from 2008 to 2019 (11 years)  
2243 Mission St. from 2022 to Present (2 years)

#### Legacy Business Program

Office of Small Business  
City Hall Room 140  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
(415) 554-6680  
legacybusiness@sfgov.org  
[www.legacybusiness.org](http://www.legacybusiness.org)





PER CRITERION 1: Has the business operated in San Francisco for more than 20 years but less than 30 years, had no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years, significantly contributed to the history or identity of a particular neighborhood or community and, if not included in the Registry, face a significant risk of displacement?

Yes, Bissap Baobab has operated in San Francisco for more than 20 years with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years, has significantly contributed to the history and identity of the (Neighborhood Name) neighborhood and, if not included on the Registry, would face a significant risk of displacement.

## CRITERION 2

**Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?**

Yes, Bissap Baobab has contributed to the history and identity of the Mission District neighborhood and San Francisco.

The Historic Preservation Commission recommended the applicant as qualifying, noting the following ways the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community:

- Bissap Baobab is one of the only West African, specifically Senegalese, restaurants in the Bay Area. The restaurant features a unique Senegalese-Mexican fusion menu. While also a restaurant, Bissap Baobab is a global entertainment venue. The business hosts a wide variety of international musical events and performances including salsa, bachata, reggaeton, cumbia, Balkan, Afrobeats, Bollywood tunes, flamenco, house/EDM, movie screenings, book readings, Spanish and French meet ups, and much more. This space is widely considered as one of the first places to host Afrobeat events, creating a large significant gathering space for the African community.
- Bissap Baobab has hosted many significant celebrities and dignitaries over the years, including Joan Baez; Speaker of the House of Representatives: Nancy Pelosi; United States Representative: Adam Schiff, Katie Porter, and Barbara Lee; and Mayors London Breed and Willie Brown.
- The interior of the restaurant contains a mural of singer Joan Baez as well as a custom-made mural by Christopher Burch featuring women of color trailblazers that includes Maya Angelou, Amanda Gorman, Angela Davis, Dolores Huerta, and others.
- There have been a number of features and articles including San Francisco Chronicle, SF Gate, and Eater San Francisco.

## CRITERION 3

**Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?**

Yes, Bissap Baobab is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business.

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that Bissap Baobab qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) and recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions.



Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Restaurant and performance venue.
- West African fusion restaurant and international music and performance revenue.
- Interior mural of singer Joan Baez.
- Mural of Women of Color trailblazers including Maya Angelou, Amanda Gorman, Angela Davis, Dolores Huerta, and others.

### **CORE PHYSICAL FEATURE OR TRADITION THAT DEFINES THE BUSINESS**

Following is the core physical feature or tradition that defines the business that would be required for maintenance of the business on the Legacy Business Registry.

- Restaurant featuring African cuisine.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Small Business Commission include Bissap Baobab currently located at 2243 Mission St. in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds  
Legacy Business Program

#### **Legacy Business Program**

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City Hall Room 140  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
(415) 554-6680  
[legacybusiness@sfgov.org](mailto:legacybusiness@sfgov.org)  
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# Small Business Commission

Resolution No. \_\_\_\_\_

July 22, 2024

## BISSAP BAOBAB

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**Adopting findings approving the Legacy Business Registry application for Bissap Baobab, currently located at 2243 Mission St.**

**WHEREAS**, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; or

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for more than 20 years but less than 30 years, has had no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years, has significantly contributed to the history or identity of a particular neighborhood or community and, if not included on the Registry, faces a significant risk of displacement; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and identity; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business; and

**WHEREAS**, at a duly noticed public hearing held on July 22, 2024, the San Francisco Small Business Commission reviewed documents and correspondence, and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry application; therefore

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Small Business Commission hereby includes Bissap Baobab in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Small Business Commission recommends safeguarding the below listed physical features and traditions at Bissap Baobab.

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Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Restaurant and performance venue.
- West African fusion restaurant and international music and performance revenue.
- Interior mural of singer Joan Baez.
- Mural of Women of Color trailblazers including Maya Angelou, Amanda Gorman, Angela Davis, Dolores Huerta, and others.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Small Business Commission requires maintenance of the below listed core physical feature or tradition to maintain Bissap Baobab on the Legacy Business Registry:

- Restaurant featuring African cuisine.

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I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on July 22, 2024.

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Katy Tang  
Director

RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

Ayes –  
Nays –  
Abstained –  
Absent –

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<b>Legacy Business Registry</b>	<b>Application Review Sheet</b>
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**CRITERION 1:** Has the applicant has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?  
 Yes  No

3386 19th St. from 1998 to 2022 (24 years)  
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3372 19th St. from 2008 to 2019 (11 years)  
2243 Mission St. from 2022 to Present (2 years)

**PER CRITERION 1:** Has the business operated in San Francisco for more than 20 years but less than 30 years and significantly contributed to the history or identity of a particular neighborhood or community, and does it face a significant risk of displacement if not included in the Registry?  
 Yes  No

**CRITERION 2:** Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?  
 Yes  No

**CRITERION 3:** Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?  
 Yes  No

**NOTES:** Bissap Baobab is at significant risk of displacement. The high rent and escalating cost of utilities in the city have put immense financial pressure on the business. Getting listed on the Legacy Business Registry would provide crucial financial assistance and long-term lease stability, helping Bissap Baobab secure its future in a rapidly gentrifying neighborhood.

**DELIVERY DATE TO HPC:** June 18, 2024

Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds  
Legacy Business Program

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Member, Board of Supervisors  
District 9



City and County of San Francisco

## HILLARY RONEN

February 12, 2024

Richard Kurylo, Legacy Business Program Manger  
Legacy Business Program, San Francisco Office of Small Business

Dear Mr. Kurylo:

I am writing a Letter of Nomination in support of Bissap Baobab, located at 2243-2247 Mission Street as a District 9 Legacy Business. Bissap Baobab has operated for 25 years in the Mission District as one of the Bay Area's only Senegalese restaurants, home to West African cuisine and beverages. Bissap Baobab also hosts live music performances and operates as a nightlife music venue on the weekends, hosting international artists and genres ranging from Salsa Wednesdays to Balkan Sundays. Neighbors near and far look forward to these performances and visit Bissap Baobab to come together in community.

Bissap Baobab's owner, Marco Senghor, has been an incredible owner and community member who also deserves recognition for all he has had to overcome to maintain this Black and immigrant-owned business in San Francisco. In addition to the fantastic entertainment and joy that Bissap Baobab brings to the Mission District, Marco is also generous in offering his venue as a community and meeting space for all the civic engagement and community groups in the Mission. It is an honor to nominate Bissap Baobab as a Legacy Business in District 9.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Hillary Ronen".

Hillary Ronen  
Supervisor, District 9



# Legacy Business Registry Application



## Business Information

**Business name:** Bissap Baobab

**Business owner name(s):** Marco Senghor

*Identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business*

**Current business address:** 2243 Mission Street, San Francisco CA 94103

**Telephone:** ( 415 ) 235 – 4606      **Email:** marco@bissapbaobab.com

**Mailing address (if different than above):** 2319 Mission St., San Francisco, CA 94110-1813

**Website:** https://bissapbaobab.com/

**Facebook:** https://www.facebook.com/BissapBaobabVilla      **Twitter:** N/A

**7-digit San Francisco Business Account Number (BAN):** 0 3 7 8 5 0 7

**Do any of these describe your business?** (select all that apply)

*Requires at least 51% of the business be owned, operated, and controlled by the business designation below.*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Immigrant-Owned Business | <input type="checkbox"/> Owned by Person with a Disability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LGBTQ+-Owned Business               | <input type="checkbox"/> Veteran-Owned Business            |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minority-Owned Business* | <input type="checkbox"/> Woman-Owned Business              |

*\*Minority is defined as one or more of the following racial or ethnic groups: American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Black or African American; Hispanic or Latino; Middle Eastern or North African; Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander*

## Contact Person Information

**Contact person name:** Kevin Ortiz

**Contact person title:** Senior Advisor

**Contact telephone:** (   ) –      **Contact email:**



## Business Location(s)

List the business address of the original San Francisco location, the start date of business, and the dates of operation at the original location. Check the box indicating whether the original location of the business in San Francisco is the founding location of the business.

If the business moved from its original location and has had additional addresses in San Francisco, identify all other addresses and the dates of operation at each address.

**Original San Francisco address:**  **Zip Code:**

**Is this location the founding location of the business? (Y/N):**

**Dates at this location:** **From:**  **To:**

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**Other address (if applicable):**  **Zip Code:**

**Dates at this location:** **From:**  **To:**

---

**Other address (if applicable):**  **Zip Code:**

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**Other address (if applicable):**  **Zip Code:**

**Dates at this location:** **From:**  **To:**

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## Applicant Disclosures

### San Francisco Taxes, Business Registration, Licenses, Labor Laws and Public Information Release.

This section is verification that all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses are current and complete, and there are no current violations of San Francisco labor laws. This information will be verified. A business deemed not current with all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses, or has current violations of San Francisco labor laws, will not be eligible to apply for grants through the Legacy Business Program.

In addition, we are required to inform you that all information provided in the application will become subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.

Please read the following statements and check each to indicate that you agree with the statement. Then sign below in the space provided.

- I am authorized to submit this application on behalf of the business.
- I attest that the business is current on all of its San Francisco tax obligations.
- I attest that the business's business registration and any applicable regulatory license(s) are current.
- I attest that the Office of Labor Standards and Enforcement (OLSE) has not determined that the business is currently in violation of any of the City's labor laws, and that the business does not owe any outstanding penalties or payments ordered by the OLSE.
- I understand that documents submitted with this application may be made available to the public for inspection and copying pursuant to the California Public Records Act and San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance.
- I hereby acknowledge and authorize that all photographs and images submitted as part of the application may be used by the City without compensation.
- I understand that the Small Business Commission may revoke the placement of the business on the Registry if it finds that the business no longer qualifies, and that placement on the Registry does not entitle the business to a grant of City funds.

Name: Kevin Ortiz

Signature: *Kevin Ortiz (on behalf of Marco Senghor)*

Date: 10/02/23

# **BISSAP BAOBAB**

## **Written Historical Narrative**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **a. Describe the business. What does it sell or provide?**

Bissap Baobab is a unique establishment blending dining, culture, live music, and entertainment. It offers dinner service, featuring an array of dishes that reflect French West African culture. Additionally, the venue is known for its artisan cocktails and vibrant Latin and Afrobeat events on select nights, and hosts international performances monthly. The business, infused with the concept of 'teranga'—a Senegalese term for hospitality—strives to create a welcoming, multicultural atmosphere. This ethos reflects the vision of its founder, Marco Senghor, who aims to celebrate diversity and community through this West African oasis.

#### **b. Describe whom the business serves.**

Located in San Francisco's Mission District with a global audience, Bissap Baobab hosts patrons from all walks and nationalities of life. While the restaurant has Senegalese, French, and Mexican fusion, it hosts individuals from Europe, Africa, South America, and many parts of Asia, as well as queer and non-binary individuals. Baobab's age of the patrons ranges from the 21-35 professional tech worker to older 40s and older patrons, of all shapes and sizes. One quote that is commonly heard at Baobab is, "I met my spouse at Bissap Baobab."

#### **c. In about 2-5 words (15-30 characters), describe what the business is known for.**

Senegalese restaurant; global entertainment venue.

### **CRITERION 1: The business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years**

#### **a. Provide a short history of the business, including locations and owners.**

Bissap Baobab was founded in 1998 as "Little Baobab" by Marco Senghor at 3386-3388 19th Street. The business rented the space. Little Baobab was the fictitious business name under the ownership name "Lat Restaurant Inc." All the following locations have operated under Lat Restaurant Inc. since the beginning.

In 2000, Little Baobab expanded to an additional and larger location at 2323 Mission Street as a renter under the dba Bissap Baobab.

In 2008, Marco bought the building at 3372-3380 19th Street, next door to Little Baobab, and moved Bissap Baobab into the new location.

In 2019, Marco sold his building 3372-3380 19th Street to the business Kimbara and closed Bissap Baobab. Marco continued to operate Little Baobab as a renter out of its original location at 3386-3388 19th Street.

In 2022, Marco moved Little Baobab from 3386-3388 19th Street to a new location at 2243-2247 Mission Street and changed the name to Bissap Baobab. It currently operates today under the dba Bissap Baobab at the official address of 2243 Mission Street.

**b. Provide the ownership history of the business in a consolidated year-to-year format.**

1998 to Present: Marco Senghor

**c. Describe any circumstances that required the business to cease operations in San Francisco for any significant length of time.**

Since 1998, Bissap Baobab has always operated in a brick and mortar location. The business has not ceased operations since it was founded in 1998, including during COVID when the business was catering for the city through SF New Deal, providing meals to the homeless.

**CRITERION 2: The business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community**

**a. Describe the business' contribution to the history and/or identity of the neighborhood, community, business sector, or San Francisco as a whole.**

Bissap Baobab is one of the only West African, specifically Senegalese, restaurants in the Bay Area. However, in addition to the Senegalese-Mexican fusion menu unique to the restaurant, Bissap Baobab hosts a wide variety of international musical events and performances. These include salsa, bachata, reggaeton, cumbia, Balkan, Afrobeats, Bollywood tunes, flamenco, house/EDM, movie screenings, book readings, Spanish and French meet-ups, and much more.

In many ways, the cultural blends of many nations reverberate throughout Baobab, located in San Francisco's Mission District – a neighborhood with significant Latino history and cultural influence. Bissap Baobab has also been a breakout space for local artists, looking for spaces, venue, and gigs to share their art. Baobab is also considered widely as one of the first places to host Afrobeat events, creating a large significant gathering space for the African community. There is no space like Bissap Baobab in the Mission District.

**b. Is the business associated with significant people or events, either now or in the past?**

Bissap Baobab has hosted many celebrities and dignitaries over the years, including Joan Baez; Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi; U.S. Representatives Adam Schiff, Katie Porter, and Barbara Lee; and Mayors London Breed and Willie Brown, as well as a host of local and state representatives.

**c. How does the business demonstrate its commitment to the community?**

In addition to being an international staple, Bissap Baobab has greatly contributed to the local Mission community by sponsoring and donating time and resources to community-based organizations. This has included happy hours, catering, fundraisers, memorials, and funds donated to these organizations, as well as local events.

Marco Senghor also serves on the Immigrant Rights Commission, weighing in on local immigration policies and resolutions. Marco leads from the perspective of lived personal experiences of immigration practices impacting his life.

**d. Has the business ever been referenced in the media, business trade publication, and/or historical documents?**

Bissap Baobab has been mentioned numerous times in the media, in particular regarding challenges in obtaining alcohol licenses. Following are some key media references:

- *“Rum will flow at S.F. Senegalese restaurant after long dispute”*  
San Francisco Chronicle  
August 24, 2023  
<https://www.sfchronicle.com/food/restaurants/article/bissap-baobab-bar-drinks-18326699.php>
- *“SF restaurant Bissap Baobab prevails after 10-month battle over noise complaints”*  
SFGATE  
May 16, 2023  
<https://www.sfgate.com/food/article/bissap-baobab-liquor-license-san-francisco-18102524.php>
- *“‘They want the Mission to die’: Neighbors keep fighting beloved S.F. restaurant”*  
San Francisco Chronicle  
February 8, 2023  
<https://www.sfchronicle.com/sf/bayarea/heatherknight/article/mission-district-club-restaurant-17769564.php>
- *“A New Senegalese Restaurant Will Bring Lebanese Brunch and Afro Beats to the Mission”*  
Eater San Francisco  
July 19, 2022  
<https://sf.eater.com/2022/7/19/23270039/big-baobab-new-senegalese-restaurant-mission-san-francisco>

**e. Has the business ever received any awards, recognition, or political commendations?**

Bissap Baobab has been awarded by State Assembly, State Senate, multiple supervisors, and the Assessor Recorder's office with awards of commendation and recognition by the respective legislative offices.

- **October 12, 2023:** State Assemblymember Phil Ting presented a Certificate of Recognition for Marco Senghor at Mission Economic Development Agency's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala
- **October 7, 2021:** Supervisor Myrna Melgar, District 7, presented a Certificate of Recognition for Little Baobab
- **October 7, 2021:** Supervisor Matt Haney, District 6, presented a Certificate of Recognition for Little Baobab
- **September 24, 2021:** Assessor-Recorder Joaquin Torres presented a Certificate of Recognition for Little Baobab
- **September 15, 2001:** State Assemblywoman Carole Migden presented a Certificate of Recognition for Little Baobab

**f. How would the community be diminished if the business were to be sold, relocated, shut down, etc.?**

If Bissap Baobab were to close, the Mission and the city as a whole would lose one of the only African restaurants in the Bay Area, which contributes to the arts, live entertainment, and culture in San Francisco. In many ways, Bissap Baobab is unique for the range of international events and performances that can be found under a single roof. Without Bissap Baobab, there would be no place to enjoy Senegalese fusion food in the Mission, and its closure would displace 15 workers.

**Although Bissap Baobab is not yet 30 years old, the business has operated in San Francisco for more than 20 years and, if not included in the Registry, would face a significant risk of displacement as noted below. Therefore, it is eligible for listing on the Legacy Business Registry.**

Bissap Baobab, a cherished cultural institution in San Francisco, is at significant risk of displacement if it is not included in the San Francisco Legacy Business Program. The high rent and escalating cost of utilities in the city have put immense financial pressure on many small businesses, and Bissap Baobab is no exception. San Francisco's real estate market is notoriously expensive, and without the support that come with being a Legacy Business, Bissap Baobab could struggle to meet these increasing expenses. Inclusion in the program would provide crucial financial assistance and long-term lease stability, helping to secure its future in a rapidly gentrifying neighborhood.

The Legacy Business Registry is vital for Bissap Baobab's survival. The program not only offers financial grants but also provides marketing and technical assistance, which could help Bissap Baobab recover from its recent profit losses and build a more sustainable business model. The

recognition and support from the Legacy Business Program would also reinforce Bissap Baobab's importance to the community, potentially easing tensions with neighbors and ensuring that this unique cultural hub remains a vibrant part of San Francisco's diverse cultural landscape.

### **CRITERION 3: The business is committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business**

**a. Is the business associated with a culturally significant building, structure, object, signage, mural, architectural detail, neon sign, or any other special physical feature that defines the business?**

Bissap Baobab's current iteration hosts two large rooms (one for performances, the other for dining) and an outdoor patio. There is a mural on the inside of the business currently from singer Joan Baez in the restaurant, as well as a custom-made mural from Christopher Burch with women of color trailblazers that includes Maya Angelou, Amanda Gorman, Angela Davis, Dolores Huerta, and others.

**b. In a few words, describe the main business activity you commit to maintaining.**

West African fusion restaurant and international music and performance venue.

**c. What is the plan to keep the business open in the long term beyond the current ownership?**

Marco Senghor hopes to eventually be able to buy and own the building at 2243 Mission Street, like he did at his previous locations. He plans on operating the space as long as he can, and eventually selling the business and building to supporters or gifting them to family to continue on when he is ready to retire.

**d. What challenges is the business facing today?**

Bissap Baobab has operated since 1998 and is currently at risk of being displaced. Due to a recent rent increase, as well as the declining revenue impacts for businesses citywide post pandemic, the business has been struggling to afford the rent.

Furthermore, Bissap Baobab has faced substantial profit losses over the past year due to complications with its liquor license. Neighbor complaints led to a hold on their liquor license, a critical component of their business model. The inability to serve alcohol has severely impacted their revenue, as the sale of beverages typically represents a significant portion of income for nightlife and entertainment venues. This setback has strained their financial resources, making it even more challenging to cover the already high costs of rent and utilities.

During the COVID pandemic, Bissap Baobab received no federal support, only help from the Office of Economic and Workforce Development through a business training grant. However, due to the opposition for a routine liquor license and fraudulent sound complaints, Bissap Baobab used that supporting money for soundproofing while waiting over a year to be approved for a full liquor license. Getting added to the Legacy Business Registry would provide recognition and marketing support that could help the business.

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**Legacy Business Program staff will add the following details:**

**a. Features or traditions that define the business and should be maintained for the business to remain on the Legacy Business Registry.**

Restaurant and performance venue.

**b. Other special features of the business location, such as if the property associated with the business is listed on a local, state, or federal historic resources registry.**

The Planning Department Historic Resource Status of the building at 2243-2247 Mission Street is "C - No Historic Resource Present."





**BISSAP BAOBAB**

EAG

EAGLE  
LOAN OFFICE  
PAWNBROK

Jossimar  
LONDO



Eater San Francisco







Joe Kukura, Hoodline





**BISSAP**  **BAOBAB**

©Samuel Pignan - Bissap Baobab 2015

BUSINESS

# Bissap Baobab finally wins liquor license, plans to make its own rum



by **ELENI BALAKRISHNAN**  
AUGUST 24, 2023, 4:52 PM



Bissap Baobab on Mission Street. Photo by Maria C. Ascarrunz



A year after moving into a much larger Mission Street space, and after months of struggling with neighbors and permitting processes, Bissap Baobab owner Marco Senghor received his liquor license Wednesday for the beloved local dancehall.

“We’re still alive,” Senghor said, “That shows how Baobab has been in the hearts of people — they’ve been supporting us without any liquor.”

Senghor has faced battle after battle since he decided to move his longtime business. His plans to take over the old Lupulandia venue at 2243 Mission St. were **challenged by neighbors** worried about noise, before and after he moved in last summer.

Though he secured his **entertainment license** in July 2022, the neighbors regularly filed noise complaints, and sent inspectors to his business. Senghor complied with the Entertainment Commission’s rules — even spending his OEWD business grant on \$80,000 of soundproofing — but only just secured his **beer and wine license** this summer after a **months-long appeals process**, complicated by neighbors’ complaints.

The license awarded on Wednesday allows him to serve hard liquor.

“We’re lucky, because Baobab has a name, but somebody else that’s beginning would be gone,” Senghor said. “It’s time to change some policies.”

The *San Francisco Chronicle* was **first to report** on Senghor’s acquisition of the license.

Senghor said that he was on the verge of handing the keys back to his landlord, who was patient and understanding, but could only give him breaks on rent for so long.

“After one year, I’d started not believing anymore,” Senghor said. He lost managers and employees, and often struggled to bring in enough customers, who could find stronger drinks elsewhere.



Little Baobab owner Marco Senghor stands in front of the old Little Baobab on 19th Street.

Baobab, which is known for its dance performances, Senegalese food, and international music and clientele, is “a combination of cocktails, celebration, and food,” Senghor said. “If you remove one of the main elements that keeps everything together ... at some point people want, need, to have that to celebrate.”

And now, not only does he have a license to serve the vodka and rum and whiskey in his signature cocktails instead of low-ABV substitutes, Senghor also plans to distill his own rum.

When he first came to the U.S., Senghor started making and bottling his own ginger juice, and eventually distributed it to dozens of stores across the Bay Area. He worked out of the small catering kitchen on 19th Street, which eventually became Bissap Baobab’s home in the 1990s.

“That was the beginning of Baobab, without knowing it,” he chuckles. Today, all that remains of that first business venture is the fresh juice he still serves at his restaurant, but that could change soon. “Twenty-seven years went by, and it’s time to do it again ... a different way, with rum, with liquor.”

He has several flavors of rum in mind, and is teaching himself to make them and hopes, eventually, to bottle them. He is also planning to expand the food menu and offer new desserts.

Well drinks are already available at Bissap Baobab today, and tomorrow Senghor expects to have his top-shelf liquor come in. He expects to host a couple reopening celebration parties in September.

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### Review: At Bissap Baobab, what's old is new again!



by [MARIA C. ASCARRUNZ](#) JUNE 17, 2023, 2:28 PM



### At Bissap Baobab's alcohol license hearing, witnesses debate noise source for hours



by [CHRISTINA A. MACINTOSH](#) MARCH 16, 2023, 6:00 AM



### 'Big Baobab' to plant fresh roots on Mission Street



by [ELENI BALAKRISHNAN](#) JULY 20, 2022, 2:06 PM

<https://www.sfgate.com/food/article/bissap-baobab-liquor-license-san-francisco-18102524.php>

# SFGATE

[FOOD](#)

## SF restaurant Bissap Baobab prevails after 10-month battle over noise complaints

By [Madeline Wells](#)

May 16, 2023



Bissap Baobab is at 2243 Mission St. in San Francisco.  
Courtesy of Marco Senghor

After a 10-month battle over noise complaints, San Francisco's Bissap Baobab has prevailed. The Mission District Senegalese [restaurant](#) and nightclub will finally receive its beer and wine license, as first reported by [Eater](#).

[Bissap Baobab](#) first moved into the former Lupulandia Brewery space at 2243 Mission St. last summer, a revival for the beloved business that closed back in 2019. But things got off to a rocky start when [noise complaints from neighbors](#) living in condos next door delayed the restaurant's liquor license application. Owner Marco Senghor went public with the debacle in February, launching a [GoFundMe](#) to raise funds for soundproofing and related losses in business.

Senghor's adviser, Kevin Ortiz, told SFGATE that Senghor has spent more than \$80,000 on soundproofing.



Marco Senghor, the owner of Bissap Baobab, said that he has spent thousands to soundproof his business after neighbors filed complaints about his business to the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control. San Francisco Chronicle via Getty Images

After several court hearings with San Francisco's office of the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, an administrative law judge overruled the protests against Bissap Baobab this month, granting it a beer and wine license after an appeal period. In the decision, the judge wrote that Bissap Baobab serves a public convenience or necessity due to its unique "Senegalese Mexican fusion menu" and the business's "furtherance of a revitalization effort in the Mission District."

The judge also acknowledged that Senghor “appears to have made specific efforts to improve compliance with the noise conditions.”

“It has been very difficult, so the news has been fantastic,” Senghor told SFGATE. “But we still have to keep the energy because we need to grow now. The rebirth of the Baobab starts today.”

Bissap Baobab was able to survive the delays in obtaining its liquor license by holding other events in the space, such as Zumba and tango classes, as well as renting it out for weddings and birthday parties. Senghor also obtained a loan from the city, and his landlord gave him a rent reduction.

“This was the community really coming together to make sure that this longstanding community institution that’s been around for 25 years in the Mission, one of the few West African eateries in the entire Bay Area that is hosting live international music, is able to survive and able to thrive in the neighborhood,” said Ortiz. “But it really did take a herculean effort. ... It shouldn’t have had to be this hard to just apply for a beer and wine license.”

With this beer and wine license victory, Senghor said he’s excited to finally focus on “the food, the colors, the energy, what is really Baobab.” He plans to debut a full calendar of themed nights, such as Afro-Taco Tuesdays with live Afro-Latinx music. The restaurant also recently finished construction on its front patio, and plans to apply for a full liquor license as soon as possible.

“This is a huge community win,” Ortiz said. “... But it does clearly highlight some overlying issues that need to be addressed, whether it’s neighbors that are not understanding or wanting to enjoy vibrant cultures ... or just the overall efforts that need to be made to help small businesses return to and thrive on busy economic corridors, like Mission Street.”

### [Madeline Wells](#)

#### SENIOR REPORTER

Madeline Wells is a senior reporter for SFGATE covering food and drink in the Bay Area. She grew up in the Seattle area and received her B.A. in English and Media Studies from UC Berkeley. Prior to SFGATE, she was an associate editor at East Bay Express and freelance writer covering the Bay Area music scene. Email: [madeline.wells@sfgate.com](mailto:madeline.wells@sfgate.com)



# LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**HEARING DATE: JULY 17, 2024**

*Filing Date:* June 18, 2024  
*Case No.:* 2024-005654LBR  
*Business Name:* Bissap Baobab  
*Business Address:* 2243 Mission Street  
*Zoning:* NCT (Mission Street Neighborhood Commercial Transit) Zoning District  
65-B Height and Bulk District  
*Block/Lot:* 3590/115  
*Applicant:* Kevin Ortiz (on behalf of Marco Senghor)  
2319 Mission Street  
San Francisco, CA  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Hillary Ronen  
*Located In:* District 9  
*Staff Contact:* Wesley Wong - 628-652-7466  
Wesley.a.wong@sfgov.org  
*Recommendation:* Adopt a Resolution to Recommend Approval

## Business Description

Bissap Baobab, located at 2243 Mission Street in the heart of the Mission District, is primarily a Senegalese restaurant and a global entertainment venue. It's a unique establishment blending dining, culture, lively music, and entertainment. It offers an array of dishes that reflect French West African culture. The venue is known for its vibrant Latin and Afrobeat events on some nights, and hosts international performances monthly. Bissap Baobab is infused with the concept of 'Teranga' – a Senegalese term for hospitality – and the business strives to create a welcoming, multicultural atmosphere.

When he first came to the United States, owner and operator of Bissap Baobab, Marco Senghor started making and bottling his own ginger juice out of a small catering kitchen on 19<sup>th</sup> Street; this would eventually be the home and beginnings of Bissap Baobab – a cornerstone of the Mission District community. Originally "Little Baobab" in 1998, this business has been held as a breakout space for local artists, looking for spaces, venues, and gigs to share their art. The business has sponsored and donated time and resources to community-based organizations including happy hours, catering, fundraisers, memorials, and funds to these organizations as well as local events.

Bissap Baobab regularly holds a wide variety of international musical events and performances including salsa, bachata, reggaeton, cumbia, Balkan, Afrobeats, Bollywood tunes, Flamenco, movie screenings, book readings, Spanish and French meet-ups and much more. The venue is considered widely as one of the first places to host Afrobeat events, creating a large significant gathering space for the African community. For its contributions to the Mission District community, Bissap Baobab and its owner, Marco Senghor, have been awarded multiple awards by various offices such as State Assemblymember: Phil Ting; Assessor-Recorder: Joaquin Torres; State Assemblymember: Carol Migden; and Board of Supervisors: Myrna Melgar and Matt Haney.

## Staff Analysis

### Review Criteria

#### 1. *When was business founded?*

Bissap Baobab was originally founded in 1998 as “Little Baobab” by Marco Senghor at 3386-3388 19<sup>th</sup> Street. In 2000, Bissap Baobab expanded to an additional and larger location at 2323 Mission Street as a renter under the business name: Bissap Baobab. Bissap Baobab, including its time as Little Baobab, has operated in San Francisco for 26 years.

#### 2. *Does the business qualify for listing on the Legacy Business Registry? If so, how?*

Yes. Bissap Baobab has operated in San Francisco for more than 20 years but less than 30 years, and has significantly contributed to the history or identity of a particular neighborhood or community and, if not included in the Registry, faces a significant risk of displacement.

- a. Bissap Baobab, including its time as “Little Baobab,” has operated continuously in San Francisco for 26 years.
- b. Bissap Baobab has contributed to the history and identity of the Mission District neighborhood and San Francisco.
- c. Bissap Baobab is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the organization.

#### 3. *Is the business associated with a culturally significant art/craft/cuisine/tradition?*

Yes. Bissap Baobab is one of the only West African, specifically Senegalese, restaurant in the Bay Area. The restaurant features a unique Senegalese-Mexican fusion menu. While also a restaurant, Bissap Baobab is a global entertainment venue. Bissap Baobab hosts a wide variety of international musical events and performances including salsa, bachata, reggaeton, cumbia, Balkan, Afrobeats, Bollywood tunes, flamenco, house/EDM, movie screenings, book readings, Spanish and French meet ups, and much more. This space is widely considered as one of the first places to host Afrobeat events, creating a large significant gathering space for the African community.



4. *Is the business or its building associated with significant events, persons, and/or architecture?*

Yes. Bissap Baobab has hosted many significant celebrities and dignitaries over the years, including Joan Baez; Speaker of the House of Representatives: Nancy Pelosi; United States Representative: Adam Schiff, Katie Porter, and Barbara Lee; and Mayors London Breed and Willie Brown.

The interior of the restaurant contains a mural of singer Joan Baez as well as a custom-made mural from Christopher Burch with women of color trailblazers that include Maya Angelou, Amanda Gorman, Angela Davis, Dolores Huerta, and others.

5. *Is the property associated with the business listed on a local, state, or federal historic resource registry?*

No. The Planning Department Historic Resource Status of the building at 2243 Mission Street is "C – No Historic Resource Present."

6. *Is the business mentioned in a local historic context statement?*

No. As of the date of this executive summary, this property has not been mentioned in a historic context statement.

7. *Has the business been cited in published literature, newspapers, journals, etc.?*

Yes. There have been a number of features and articles including *San Francisco Chronicle*, *SF Gate*, and *Eater San Francisco*.

### Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

Location(s) associated with the business:

Current Locations:

- 2243 Mission Street (2022 to Present)
- 3386 19th St. from 1998 to 2022 (24 years)
- 2323 Mission St. from 2000 to 2008 (8 years)
- 3372 19th St. from 2008 to 2019 (11 years)

Recommended by Applicant

- Restaurant and performance venue
- West African fusion restaurant and international music and performance revenue
- Interior mural of singer Joan Baez
- Mural of Women of Color trailblazers including Maya Angelou, Amanda Gorman, Angela Davis, Dolores Huerta, and others.

Additional Recommended by Staff

N/A

### Basis for Recommendation

The Department recommends the Historic Preservation Commission adopt a resolution recommending the business listed above be adopted by the Small Business Commission to the Legacy Business Registry.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Draft Resolution

Legacy Business Registry Application:

- Application Review Sheet
- Section 1 – Business / Applicant Information
- Section 2 – Business Location(s)
- Section 3 – Disclosure Statement
- Section 4 – Written Historical Narrative
  - Criterion 1 – History and Description of Business
  - Criterion 2 – Contribution to Local History
  - Criterion 3 – Business Characteristics
- Contextual Photographs and Background Documentation



# HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION DRAFT RESOLUTION NO. ###

**HEARING DATE: JULY 17, 2024**

*Case No.:* 2024-005654LBR  
*Business Name:* Bissap Baobab  
*Business Address:* 2243 Mission Street  
*Zoning:* NCT (Mission Street Neighborhood Commercial Transit) Zoning District  
65-B Height and Bulk District  
*Block/Lot:* 3590/115  
*Applicant:* Kevin Ortiz (on behalf of Marco Senghor)  
2319 Mission Street  
San Francisco, CA  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Hillary Ronen  
*Located In:* District 9  
*Staff Contact:* Wesley Wong - 628-652-7466  
[Wesley.a.wong@sfgov.org](mailto:Wesley.a.wong@sfgov.org)

ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR BISSAP BAOBAB CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 2243 MISSION STREET, BLOCK/LOT 3590/0115.

**WHEREAS**, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for more than 20 years but less than 30 years, significantly contributed to the history or identity of a particular neighborhood or community and, if not included in the Registry, faces a significant risk of displacement; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has contributed to the City's history and identity; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business is committed to maintaining the traditions that define the business; and

**WHEREAS**, at a duly noticed public hearing held on July 17, 2024, the Historic Preservation Commission reviewed documents, correspondence and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry nomination.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the **Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends** that Bissap Baobab qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) as it has operated in San Francisco for more than 20 years but less than 30 years, has significantly contributed to the history or identity of its neighborhood and community, and faces a significant risk of displacement if not included in the Registry.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the **Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends** safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions for Bissap Baobab.

*Location(s):*

Current Locations:

- 2243 Mission Street (2022 to Present)
- 3386 19th St. from 1998 to 2022 (24 years)
- 2323 Mission St. from 2000 to 2008 (8 years)
- 3372 19th St. from 2008 to 2019 (11 years)

*Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:*

- Restaurant and performance venue
- West African fusion restaurant and international music and performance revenue
- Interior mural of singer Joan Baez
- Mural of Women of Color trailerblazers including Maya Angelou, Amanda Gorman, Angela Davis, Dolores Huerta, and others

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Historic Preservation Commission's findings and recommendations are made solely for the purpose of evaluating the subject business's eligibility for the Legacy Business Registry, and the Historic Preservation Commission makes no finding that the subject property or any of its features constitutes a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(a).

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the **Historic Preservation Commission hereby directs** its Commission Secretary to transmit this Resolution and other pertinent materials in the case file 2024-005654LBR to the Office of Small Business July 17, 2024.

Jonas P. Ionin  
*Commission Secretary*

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

Resolution No. ###  
July 17, 2024

CASE NO. 2024-005654LBR  
Bissap Baobab

RECUSE:

ADOPTED: July 17, 2024