

# Bitter Hot Chicken Battle Ends Up In Court After Phil Tadros Sues Founder



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Burning over the battle for Budlong, Bow Truss coffee shop owner Phil Tadros is suing his former business partner after their relationship turned sour.

Tadros filed suit against Budlong Chicken and its owner, Jared Leonard, on Thursday, accusing him of breaking their operating agreement and claiming Leonard violated a non-compete clause in the contract by forming his own limited liability company three months after forming The Budlong LLC with Tadros.

He is asking a Cook County judge to hold all profits from Budlong until the case is resolved and ban Leonard from operating as Budlong Hot Chicken, the LLC he filed to create on Aug. 31.

Leonard issued a statement Friday in response: "Phil Tadros is tirelessly chasing after my brand and trying to ride the coat tails of my hard work. I'm busy running my restaurants, and now we can let the courts and attorneys decide how to handle Phil. Back to Hot Chicken and BBQ for me. Who's hungry?"

The Lakeview restaurant closed abruptly in late September after less than five months in business. Leonard said he expects to open a new Budlong on Armitage in Lincoln Park in November.

After the closure, the coffee seller insisted he had a right to half the company he helped build and blasted Leonard — who also owns the popular Rub's Backcountry Smokehouse in West Ridge.

"Budlong wouldn't even be open if I didn't help him," Tadros said. "He thought he could run from my partnership and investment because of his greed, and that's unfortunate."



Budlong Chicken at Revival Food Hall. [DNAinfo/David Matthews]

Leonard denied that Tadros had any involvement in Budlong beyond offering Leonard a lease at 2928 N. Broadway in the spring. Working with Tadros, he now says, was "as bad as you would think and more."

Tadros said he is still reeling from a Crain's Chicago Business story that detailed problems he's had with other business partners — including 15 lawsuits filed against him since 2004.

"I can't believe [Leonard] did this to me, so I have to see the truth come out," he said. "Budlong is a delicious success and I'm very excited about its growth and future and lessons learned along the way for both Jared and my team."

Tadros said he has invested \$300,000 in Budlong. He said he has the rights to the name, logos, menu, recipes and other intellectual property and wants Leonard to surrender it. He also laid claim to the 49 percent ownership of Budlong.

Leonard has called Tadros' ownership claims "ridiculous."



Budlong takes over the storefront formerly occupied by Bunny, the micro bakery. [Budlong Chicken]

In the lawsuit, Tadros said he introduced another investor to the business who also put \$100,000 into the business.

Their partnership has a "clear and ascertainable right" to be the sole Budlong in business, Tadros claims. He wants the court to permanently ban Leonard from competing with the business they worked on together, the lawsuit states.

Since August, Leonard has frozen Tadros out of Budlong operations and its financial information, also denying Tadros his share of profits or other benefits, the suit claims.

Tadros also accused Leonard of refusing to pay rent at the Armitage or Broadway locations in a ploy to transfer leases from Tadros' name to Leonard's name.

The actions have damaged Budlong "in an amount equal to all profits" from the Clark and Armitage locations, the suit states.

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