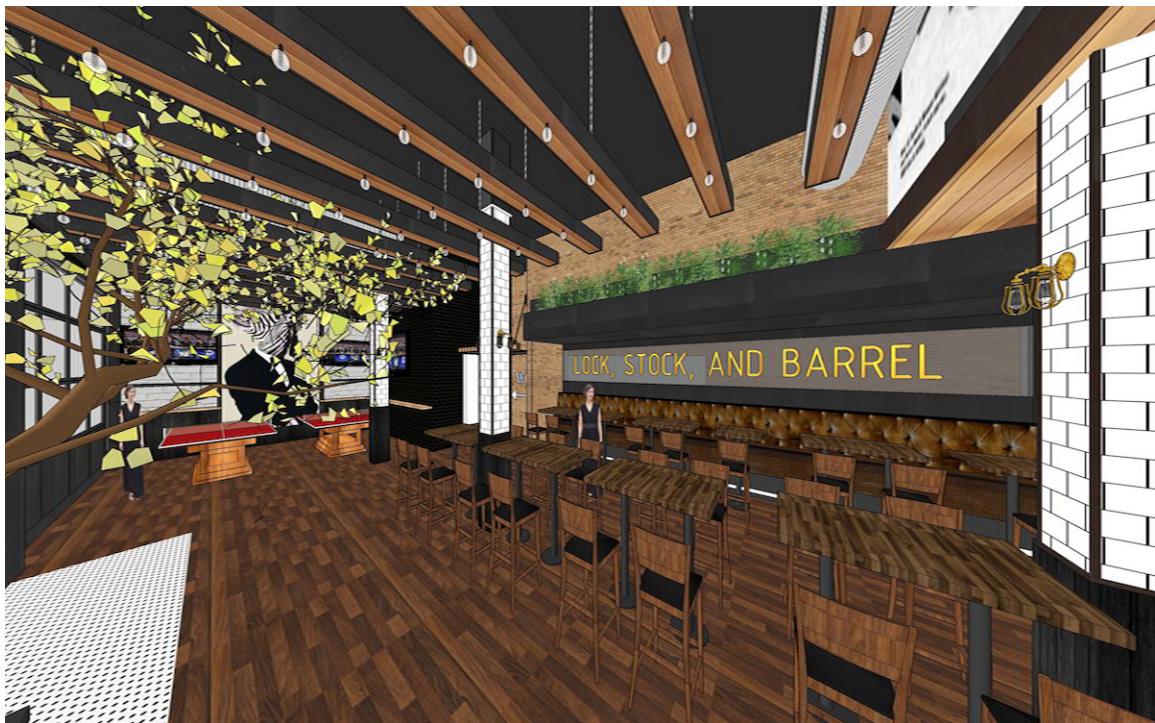




Coming Soon: The Smoking Gun & Spill The Beans

The Gaslamp gets a cocktail bar with scratch-made bites, and a coffee spot with amazing cream cheeses...



In a few weeks, 555 Market Street will be home to two innovative new San Diego hot spots under one roof — The Smoking Gun & Spill the Beans.

The Smoking Gun will be a neighborhood cocktail bar, specializing in scratch-made, local, sustainable small plates, boilermakers and ping-pong. Spill the Beans will offer a unique coffee and bagel experience specializing in scratch-made syrups, inventive homemade cream cheese, local roasters and fresh baked California style bagels.

We had a chat with the dynamic duo behind it all — award-winning cocktail specialist Eric Johnson and Executive Chef Kevin Templeton — to get the inside scoop!



The Smoking Gun

We noticed fried catfish on the menu. Can you tell us a bit about the other creative comfort foods that you'll have at The Smoking Gun?

Chef Kevin: I grew up in Ramona so the majority of this menu is very near and dear to my heart! Homemade mac & cheese, fresh baked corn bread and biscuits, sweet potatoes topped with homemade marshmallows. I truly remember eating warm spinach salads, grits and broccoli & cauliflower topped with melted cheese. Growing up in the 1980s, this entire menu is comforting and approachable. I feel a large percentage of us grew up eating items from this menu. For me, this is Sunday supper with my family.



We know The Smoking Gun will be big on local and scratch-made items. What are a few that you think will become favorites among your customers?

Eric: We are not trying to reinvent the wheel with a cocktail. However, we will remind people that drinking is fun! There's a reason classics are still around and people love their spirits. We do play around with syrups and slight infusions but we like to showcase the spirit's craft, first. I think a Paloma variation with Ancho Verde will be a big hit with the agave trends and San Diego's affinity for spice.



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You'll be offering small plates paired with boilermakers. We admit, we did have to Google boilermaker, and found a couple definitions. How will you concoct yours?

Eric: First you take a shot and then sip your beer... Or you sip your beer and take a shot... Or you slam both down and order another. This is the quintessential beverage of our industry!

Can you tell us about your vegetarian comfort foods?

Chef Kevin: I smoke quality meats from reputable farms so there won't be any issue comforting meat eaters. I wanted to make sure light eaters, guests with dietary needs and vegetarians had plenty of food to enjoy. I personally didn't see meat adding value to the flavors of the sides. In fact, I find that vegetarians haven't a ton of great options available on your average menu without heavy modification or another trip to the salad section.



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We love the idea of sustainable street food. What was the team's inspiration behind it?

Chef Kevin: When you step back and think of your favorite taco, your favorite burger, your favorite slice of pizza, your favorite San Diego Mexican joint you will notice one thing: they aren't fancy but they have tons of flavor. I care a lot for the environment and the best food I have eaten has typically been found on the side of a road, served out of a window or at a table at Grandma's house. I buy responsibly as to further protect the environment and I want this food to feel like home.

What are you two most excited about with regards to your food and drink collaboration?

Eric: I am excited to work with Chef Kevin and play off of his big flavors in the kitchen. I believe our team is talented on both sides, it will be fun to see all the creativity come together.



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Finally — we know there's a lot of excitement about this next question — when will you open your doors?

Eric: We are trying our hardest to be open in 2 to 3 weeks. When we do open, special guests (friends of the bar) Erik Estrada and Tom Selleck will be present and accounted for! Well at least the likenesses of said friends of the bar...



Spill the Beans

At Spill the Beans, you'll specialize in fresh coffee, scratch-made syrups, local roasters and fresh baked bagels. It sounds like a San Diegan's dream breakfast spot. Where'd the idea stem from?

Eric: Our partners Dave Jones and Aron Langellier looked at the space and realized that was the perfect concept for this area. Who doesn't love coffee? Especially, Dark Horse coffee. I think people will get it once they taste the bagels. We wanted to create a fun place to start your day.

You're offering a California-style bagel. What is it?

Chef Kevin: This is a lighter bagel with a slight sweetness and tons of flavor. Traditional bagels can be far more dense and slightly harder to chew. The East Coast has phenomenal bagels and this is simply our version to the West. Our goal was to create a style of bagel that you can enjoy several times a week.

And those scratch-made syrups! What will you use to create those?

Eric: We will be playing around with meshing the bar program with the coffee program and vice versa. Honestly, some of the best bartenders come from being a barista. You will see coffee drinks including house made syrups such as cinnamon bark, orgeat, and smoked hot dog water. (Still working on the last one)

You'll also have house made cream cheese — like agave and vanilla and caramelized shallot — which is incredible and unique. Any that you're particularly eager to introduce?

Chef Kevin: The ginger, soy & wasabi, as well as the red chili & garlic are very fun and tasty.

You have some inventive drinks that the baristas will be grinding and pouring. Can you tell us about a few of those?

Eric: Most of our drinks are similar to most coffee shops serving lattes, cold brews, kefir sodas from super foods, etc. We will have a couple mixed coffee drinks using house made ingredients to change up weekly.

We know you'll be featuring Dark Horse Coffee Roasters (one of our favorites, too) — can you tell us how that bean partnership came to be?

Eric: The owners of Dark Horse opened around the same time Sycamore Den opened in Normal Heights around 4 years ago. We made a quick neighborly bond by spitting on our hands and shaking on it. They are a great company with amazing owners so we simply went to some of the best in town.

Spill the Beans will share a space with The Smoking Gun. Any potential food and beverage collaborations in the future?

Eric: We will eventually use the bagel sandwiches and coffee during our early weekend hours. Football season is coming up so we need to make sure people are hyper and filled up for more booze!



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Thanks Eric & Chef Kevin! We'll keep you in the loop, There San Diego readers, as things continue to unfold with this exciting collaboration!