



Sneak Peek: An Apothecary Aperitif

Posted by **Kirsten Henri** on April 29th, 2008

Last night, we were treated to a very special preview of **Apothecary Bar + Lounge**, the new “cocktail restaurant” in the Midtown Gayborhood from restaurateur **Bruno Pouget** and **Urban Space Development**, a design-build firm (they’re responsible for **Capogiro’s** 20th & Sansom location, if you’re curious about their previous work). If all goes well with the strange and mysterious harpy known as L&I, it should be open some time next week. We’re usually reluctant to make statements of greatness before doors are open, but in this case, we’re going to make an exception. It’s going to be, as they say, The Shit.

Why? Artisan cocktails from snappy beverage consultants **The Tipping Bros. Kold-Draft** ice cubes that take longer to melt and are free of excess air impurities. Cocktails in bottles—not bottle service, but *Cocktails. In. Bottles.* A roof deck. A menu of libation-absorbing snacks meant for sharing from chef kitchen consultant Steven Cameron. We can honestly say that there’s nothing really like this going on in Philly right now. Before you all start reminding us about **Southwark**, which we love, we’d like you to know that this is just different. The gents of Southwark—and Katie Loeb over at Chick’s—need some company. Plus, a rising tide floats all seaworthy boats. And nothing floats our boat like a rising tide of delicious cocktails.

After the jump, a full breakdown...

Concept: Principles Sam and Tim Shaaban (who are brothers), Bruno Pouget and Brian Thrippleton have tied in the traditional focus of an apothecary, the idea of precise measurements, ‘dosing’ and the therapeutic effects of some of the herbs, tinctures and ingredients used in the cocktails. They talked a lot about this, but basically, the idea is really about smart drinks, some of them classic, some of them new, all created from quality ingredients and high-end spirits by bartenders who are specially trained.

Decor: More contemporary than you might expect. The long narrow space has limed Austrian oak floors, grey marble tables and Emeco chairs (you might recognize these durable lightweight chairs in their native state of aluminum, here they've been treated with a green and grey coating). The bar is topped with a frosty slab white marble and the bar is backed with shelves meant to evoke a traditional apothecary chest. Upstairs has a second, smaller bar, low chocolate suede banquettes and a roof deck.

The Drinks: Speaking of highly trained bartenders (well, beverage consultants) Paul Tanguay and Tad Carducci, also known as the Tippling Bros., are totally delightful. They whipped up samples of their cocktails while expertly dispensing obscure tidbits on the history of liquor without being twee and snot-nosed about it. We talked for a long time about ice cubes and a lot of thought and money went into the type that Apothecary is putting in its drinks. All of the spirits are top shelf here. There will be house liquors, of course, but don't expect to find any Popov's behind this bar.

They prepared two samples from their menu for us to sip - a classic **Aviation** made with dry London gin and real creme de violette, which was one of the original ingredients in the cocktail when it was invented back in the beginning of the 20th century. It turns the drink, which is served in an elegant old-fashioned martini glass, a dreamy shade of lavender, which Tanguay tells us was supposed to evoke the sky.

The second drink was a "**RustOleo**" elixir, a blend of cachaca, Flor de Cana rum, a German liqueur made from wildflower honey, acai and blueberries, that the Tippling Bros. invented. The name is a play on the berries' antioxidant qualities. The taste is bright and fresh, not nearly as sweet as you might expect and the perfect drink with which to wean someone off of their lame cosmopolitan habit.

In addition to having cocktails by the glass, you'll also be able to order some of them "by the bottle" in the same way you can order wine by the glass or bottle in a restaurant - which means that they'll be prepared earlier, leaving you less time to have to wait while your artisan cocktail is being carefully concocted. The Tippling Bros. tell us this was quite common about 150 years ago, when you might pick up a bottle of punch from the local tavern on your way to a picnic. You can't take it out of the bar here, but you can take it over to a table where you and your cocktail-happy buddies can share in it. Each bottle contains the equivalent of four cocktails.

The Food: Consulting chef Steven Cameron knows that the food here is secondary to the cocktail experience, but still integral to the careful enjoyment of it. He's put together a shareable, concise menu of mostly savory nibbles—smoked salmon sandwiches with caraway mustard and cranberry jam, for example—that are designed to refresh your palate between drinks, a twist on the idea of an intermezzo course.

The Bad News (sort of): It's not going to be cheap, but you probably knew that already. Of course, if you're into paying for quality not quantity, you're getting a lot of value here. If you're in the mood for pounding shots, this is not the place for you.

They've promised us access to a full menu shortly, so we'll post as soon as we get it.