

Hotels & Restaurants

Sycamore Den Brings Retro Dad Style to San Diego

Normal Heights welcomes its newest bar, a log cabin tribute to cool dads and the fine art of the craft cocktail

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26 Apr 2013 [Sasha Orman](#)

[Sycamore Den](#) is the kind of bar you could bring home to Dad – or at least the kind of bar you could bring your dad to for a cocktail and conversation.

While the new bar may be taking over the space once occupied by Lou Jones Inn, fans of the dive bar would hardly recognize it. Owner Nick Zanoni enlisted award-winning San Diego design team [Bells&Whistles](#) to transform the bar into a space that feels both nostalgic and unique – all cord wood and leather, whisky and shotguns, vintage lighting fixtures and cigarette machines, with a massive brass fireplace at the space's centerpiece and bathrooms that double as photo collage tributes to dads everywhere. The effect is an effortless and unpretentious kind of retro cool, kind of like the way you remember your dad from when you were young.

Last night we had the chance to check out Sycamore Den a night early and sample some of the cocktails dreamed up by Eric Johnson, who also helms the cocktail program at [Consortium Holdings](#) speakeasy Noble Experiment. Here's a taste:



Our first drink of the night is the Flannel Mouth. Spicing up classic Gin and cucumber flavors with Aperol and Angostura Bitters, it's a cocktail after our own heart.



The Monk Improved pairs Rye with Maraschino, Chartreuse, two kinds of bitters and a hefty slice of lemon zest.



L-R: The Dovetail Julip, blending Gin and Cognac with peach bitters, a fresh sprig of mint, and a kick of Absinthe; Dusty Bottoms, a brisker version of a Bloody Mary that pairs Tequila with cayenne pepper, salt celery bitters, and Cholula hot sauce; Swiss Bank brings an absinthe twist to the rum and pineapple flavors of a piña colada.



A crowd forms at the bar, while an impressive selection of liqueurs and whiskies lines an illuminated case overhead.



Warm lighting and wood paneling keep the seating to the back of the bar rustic and cozy, while the replica rifles add to the feeling that your grandpa might walk through the door at any moment and take you out for some shooting practice.



Even the entrance to the bathrooms is rugged and woody.



You would expect an antique player piano in a joint like this. What you might not expect is an antique player piano refurbished to run off an iPod and play a jaunty version of R. Kelly's "I Believe I Can Fly," but here it is and it's glorious.

Sycamore Den opens tonight at 5 PM.