

# Sacramento's BEST NEW BARS

These places put a shine on the classic craft cocktail.



The craft-cocktail revolution that swept through Sacramento a few years back brought the city a slew of faux speakeasies and hip watering holes. Now comes the second wave: a new batch of bars that put a premium on elevating the cocktail experience.

By Marybeth Bizjak : Photography by Kevin Fiscus





Canon



## Canon

**W**hen this East Sac restaurant opened last October, it instantly found both its footing and an appreciative audience. People fell in love with the concept: a casual place with a farmhouse-y vibe and a menu of intriguing small plates from Michelin-starred

chef Brad Cecchi. Given that one of Canon's owners is Clay Nutting of LowBrau and Block Butcher Bar fame, it's no surprise to find a heavy emphasis here on beverages. Jack Winks, a genial Brit who spent five years working in Paris as a bartender, oversees the bar and came up with many of the craft cocktails.

Winks sings from Sacramento's seasonal-and-local hymnbook, changing up the menu with the seasons and making his own bitters, syrups and liqueurs from produce grown in planter boxes just outside the restaurant doors. For a classic Bee's Knees, he'll use lemon thyme plucked from the garden, and you may find an edible flower grown on-site as a garnish in your drink.

Winks is known for his weird flavor combinations, like scotch and bananas, which share billing in a cocktail called The Golden Age. And he enjoys playing around with format, offering a house Negroni in a cute little single-serve bottle that arrives at the table, along with a glass, a large cube of ice and an orange twist. It's strictly PYO (pour your own)—and fun to boot.

There's a fair bit of cross-pollination between kitchen and bar. When Winks crafted his own tonic syrup from lemon grass and other ingredients, Cecchi grabbed some to make pickled cucumbers. When he was done, he returned the pickling liquid to Winks, who mixed it with gin, put it in a keg, added carbonation and served it out of the tap as a Pickled Gin and Tonic. (He hopes to do something similar this summer to produce a twist on Britain's famed Pimm's Cup.)

While Canon doesn't offer cocktail-and-food pairings, Winks is happy to offer his opinion on what drink goes with what dish. Tots with mole sauce?

Get the tequila-forward Vista Clara, whose sharpness and acidity cut through the fattiness of the tots. St. Louis ribs with espresso tamarind sauce? Order a classic Old-Fashioned or Manhattan. Chicken drumsticks with Urfa chili sauce and Greek yogurt? Have a beer. (The bar has a stellar lineup, including rarities like Sante Adairius' Full Hands In, a wild ale aged in French oak.)

The restaurant's large patio promises to be a popular spot once the weather warms up. Winks is looking forward to a patio cocktail program with spritzers, punches, tropical drinks, maybe even some blended cocktails. 1719 34th St.; (916) 469-2433; [canoneastsac.com](http://canoneastsac.com)



**OPENED**  
October 2017

**VIBE**  
Industrial crossed with modern farmhouse

**DEMOGRAPHIC**  
Hip East Sac'ers and midtowners looking for the next new thing

**TOP TIPPLE**  
The Banker

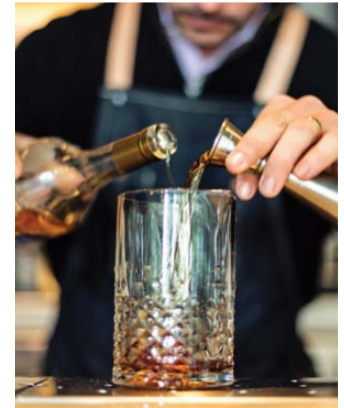
**BEST BAR BITE**  
Chicken drumsticks



Jack Winks



Ben Smith



**OPENED**  
October 2017

**VIBE**  
South Beach meets Sacramento

**DEMOGRAPHIC**  
Golden 1 season ticketholders and the occasional celeb

**TOP TIPPLE**  
House Old-Fashioned

**BEST BAR BITE**  
Maine lobster corn dog

## Revival

Add Revival to the big-city amenities on Sacramento's growing brag list. Located on the third floor of The Sawyer, a boutique hotel from SF's Kimpton group, this swanky lounge offers a number of lures for bar hoppers hungry for something new and different.

First is the rooftop patio overlooking Golden 1 Center. Amazingly, this is the only bar in town with airy views of downtown Sacramento—a niche that was just screaming to be filled. The sprawling patio has sofas, potted trees, fire pits, heaters and—mostly thrillingly—a large, sparkling-blue pool. Only hotel guests and residents of the condos on the hotel's top five floors are allowed to swim, but that doesn't stop regular folk from sitting around the pool and soaking up the scene. Groups of six or more can frolic like ballers by reserving one of the shaded patio cabanas.

Second is the star power. Just a short stroll from the downtown arena, Revival

is an unofficial clubhouse for visiting athletes and musicians. Lil Jon has partied here, and Bobby and Vlade have been spotted as well. (LeBron James, in town for a Cavs game, tried to get in on Christmas Day, but the bar was closed.)

Revival's interior has a sleek, understated appearance, with midcentury-inspired furnishings, smoked-glass pendants and brass accents. TVs are cleverly imbedded within mirrors behind the bar, so you can watch the game without feeling like you're in a sports bar. Overseeing the beverage program is Ben Smith, who cut his teeth in San Francisco's craft-cocktail scene, working at Betelnut, 14 Romolo, Dellarosa and Beretta. He takes a classic, back-to-the-basics approach to mixology. Drinks with names like Banksy and Oaxacapolitan are riffs on classic cocktails such

as the margarita and the cosmo. Like any bartenders worth their salt-rimmed glass, he and his staff make everything from pineapple juice to ginger beer from scratch.

In addition to classic cocktails, Revival offers traditional bottle service and DIY "kits" that allow groups of people to mix their own French 75 or Moscow Mule. A tray comes to the table with mixing glass, ice scoop, garnishes, mixers and a recipe card. The server demonstrates how to make the first round, and then it's up to the cocktailers to mix their own drinks. It's fun and experiential.

The lounge is open evenings only from Wednesday through Saturday. During happy hour, it's a quiet place to grab a drink and chat with the bartender. But at 9 p.m., the barstools are removed to make way for swarms of partiers heading over from the arena. The bar-focused food menu offers bites like lobster corn dogs, truffled popcorn and cotton-candied bacon. 500 J St.; (916) 545-7111; [revivalsacramento.com](http://revivalsacramento.com)

**SHAKEN, NOT STIRRED**—The problem with martinis and Manhattans is they're simply too strong for some people. For them, straight vodka tastes like jet fuel, and bitters are, well, bitter. Punch Bowl Social—the new bar/restaurant/gaming palace in downtown's DOCO area—offers the perfect solution: the adult milkshake. Served in a large Mason jar, these sweet, boozy concoctions are made with soft-serve vanilla ice cream and come in three flavors: B.B. Alexander (made with banana-infused brandy), Milk-Xologist #2 (made with coffee and mint liqueurs) and Malted Maple Royale (made with Jim Beam maple whiskey). The drinks are shaken in a diner-style milkshake machine and topped with a thick blanket of whipped cream. How many calories are in each one? Said one Punch Bowl bartender, "You don't want to know." 500 J St.; (916) 925-5610; [punchbowlsocial.com](http://punchbowlsocial.com)



## TOP TIPPLES



**HAWKS PUBLIC HOUSE**  
Eastern Thai Crested Gimlet



**REVIVAL**  
House Old-Fashioned



**KRU**  
Miso Tippy



**TEN TEN ROOM**  
Grasshopper



**CANON**  
The Banker



**THE FLAMINGO HOUSE**  
Raspberry Thyme Gin Rickey



## Hawks Public House

If Hawks Restaurant in Granite Bay is the dignified, rule-following older sister, then Hawks Public House on Alhambra Boulevard is her mischievous, rule-bending little brother. When it comes to cocktails, the first is all about the buttoned-up classics, while the second is about boundary-pushing experimentation.

Zeph Horn oversees the bar programs at both places. In his black shirt and tie, he looks the part of an old-school bartender. He's been in the business for 20 years, working in dive bars and upscale craft-cocktail lounges. As a kid, he loved



Zeph Horn



**OPENED**  
Late 2016

**VIBE**  
Upscale neighborhood bar

**DEMOGRAPHIC**  
People who are serious about their cocktails

**TOP TIPPLE**  
Eastern Thai  
Crested Gimlet

**BEST BAR BITE**  
Harissa deviled eggs



literature and history. That scholarly bent comes through at Hawks, where he is well steeped in the lore and romance of classic cocktails.

At Hawks Public House, owner Michael Fagnoni gives Horn a lot of room to experiment. Horn's progressive approach manifests itself in inventive riffs on classic cocktails. Le Penicilina is a Mexican take on the Penicillin, made with mezcal and cilantro instead of scotch and lemon. The Stockton Griffon is a rye-forward version of the venerable Hanky Panky, which was invented in the early 20th cen-

tury at the American Bar at The Savoy in London. For aroma, Horn sprays the inside of the glass with a mist of chocolate bitters before he pours the cocktail.

Horn has a way with egg whites—when making a whiskey sour or Ramos Fizz, he can shake them to a froth in little more than a minute. (In certain circles, he's known as Foam Guy.) He uses aquafaba—the braising liquid left over when the kitchen cooks garbanzo beans—as a vegan version of egg whites in a drink called The Licorice Wren (Pimm's and licorice rum).

Horn's drinks look like works of art. For one cocktail, he fans thin slices of Pink

Lady apple across the top of the drink, uses tweezers to add a scorched orange slice and tops it all with a painstaking dusting of cinnamon. For another, a drink called an Eastern Thai Crested Gimlet, he nestles a partially open Thai chili inside a Thai basil leaf, so that it looks like the stamen of a flower (or something a little more ribald). (Check out his work on Instagram @zephorn.)

But perhaps his most notorious concoction is his Blueberry Banh Mi Buteo, a mojito made with blueberry fish sauce-infused rum and banh mi herbs (cilantro, basil and mint). It's umami in a glass. 1525 Alhambra Blvd.; (916) 588-4440; hawkspublichouse.com



## Kru

When Billy Ngo moved his highly regarded midtown sushi restaurant to a larger space in East Sac, he not only gained a much bigger dining room; he was also able to install a roomy bar that combines Japanese minimalism with the ambience of a neighborhood hangout. Separated from the dining room by a wall, the bar is friendly and casual, with a roster of bartenders scooped up from some of Sacramento's top craft-cocktail purveyors.

Behind the long pine bar, those bartenders conjure up elevated drinks with a distinct Japanese accent. Bar manager Nick Amano-Dolan says their goal is to infuse classic cocktails with "Kru flavors" such as shiso and sesame oil. A drink called



Nick Amano-Dolan

Open Sesame is a riff on the White Linen, made with Junipero gin, ginseng liqueur and a house-made cucumber-and-yuzu shrub. (Because gin and cucumber go together like fish and rice.) The Kru Old-Fashioned features Japanese rice whiskey, ginger syrup and chocolate almond bitters, finished with a dehydrated orange peel that's meant to be eaten after it's soaked up the booze.

The talented chef Ngo serves as an inspiration for the bar. A cocktail called Miso Tippy (a variation on the fruity marg) gets a blast of umami from the addition of miso. And instead of a salted rim, the drink is topped with sea salt foam and a sprinkling of togarashi powder, the Japanese seven-spice mixture that includes ground red chili pepper.

Bartenders here are hands-on, using a

**OPENED**  
Late 2016

**VIBE**  
Sleek and friendly

**DEMOGRAPHIC**  
Industry folks, foodies and Japanophiles

**TOP TIPPLE**  
Miso Tippy

**BEST BAR BITE**  
Ika geso (fried squid legs)

chainsaw to cut 300-pound blocks of ice into large cubes, and employing Wagyu fat trimmings

from the kitchen to fat-wash some rye whiskey, giving it rich, butterscotch notes.

With waits of two to three hours to get into the restaurant, diners often spill over into the bar. If all the stools are taken, you can sit and wait in comfort at a large communal table in the nearby private dining room.

The Kru bar recently started serving late-night food-and-drink specials on Fridays and Saturdays. Called Ngo Reservations, it runs from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m., with beers, shots and bar food like a Wagyu burger and ramen. 3135 Folsom Blvd.; (916) 551-1559; [krurestaurant.com](http://krurestaurant.com)

## Ten Ten Room

From the street, you might walk right past Ten Ten Room. The only signage is the name discreetly written on the front window in gold letters, and the storefront doesn't give many hints about what lies inside. But once you're in the door, it's as if you've stepped back 60 years to midcentury America, the era of the martini and the Man in the Gray Flannel Suit.

Ten Ten Room is the latest offering from Tyler and Melissa Williams, the folks behind two of midtown's most popular watering holes: Tank House, a barbecue joint, and The Jungle Bird, a tiki bar. The Williamses clearly don't believe in repeating themselves. Located next door



**OPENED**  
September 2017

**VIBE**  
1960s bar with a modern edge

**DEMOGRAPHIC:**  
The Capitol crowd

**TOP TIPPLE**  
Grasshopper

**BEST BAR BITE**  
Garlic steak sandwich

to The Citizen Hotel, Ten Ten pays homage to the classic American bar, circa 1960. The high-ceilinged, narrow interior is dim and intimate, with dark-green walls, a tufted leather banquette and a single cozy booth. A library ladder extends to the top shelf of the mirrored back bar,

## The Flamingo House

When you first spy The Flamingo House, a pink Victorian whose front yard is awash with palm trees and pink flamingo lawn ornaments, you're apt to think "Toto, we're not in Kansas anymore." No, you're not. This midtown bar is the brainchild of Bobby Falcon, Christian Tolen and Matt Byrd, who met while working at The Park Ultra Lounge. Spitballing ideas, they came up with the concept for a "coastal leisure" bar with a laid-back, vacation-y vibe.

Inside, it feels more like Key West than K Street. The décor is a riotous mélange of kitschy accessories and vintage furniture that could have come from your grandma's house in Boca. In fact, most of the furnishings were scrounged from

thrift stores and Craigslist. In the front room, a life-size stuffed Afghan hound (thankfully not real) sits next to a pink velveteen sofa. Pink vinyl barstools, rattan chairs and blue velvet sectional sofas add to the playful visual cacophony.

Drinks here are light and fruit-forward, designed to be eminently quaffable. (No flavor bombs.) A grapefruit Paloma is made with freshly squeezed ruby-red grapefruit juice and Jarritos mandarin soda in place of the traditional Squirt. In summer, you're likely to find a roasted Peach Mojito and a Watermelon Raspberry Whiskey Smash, along with boozy slushies and ice cream drinks.

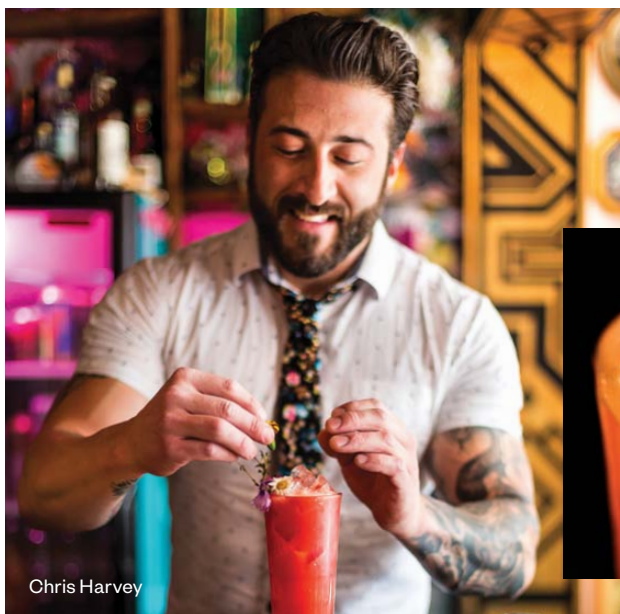
**OPENED**  
July 2017

**VIBE**  
Spring break in the city

**DEMOGRAPHIC**  
A melting pot of midtown types

**TOP TIPPLE**  
Raspberry Thyme Gin Rickey

**BEST BAR BITE**  
Flaming-o Cookie



Chris Harvey



And listen up: Liquor.com recently named Flamingo House's Raspberry Thyme Gin Rickey one of the 11 best cocktails in the country.

The kitchen puts out small, sharable plates—things like guac and chips, ceviche and panini, all made in-house. But the chef really brings the drama with a dessert called Flaming-o Cookie: a pink-velvet cookie doused with rum syrup in a cast-iron pan and set ablaze at the table.

Out in the backyard, a covered patio with swinging benches does double duty as a lounge and a dance floor. Starting at 9 p.m. on Sundays, dancers can rent headsets for \$5 and dance along silently to one of several dueling DJs. It's both eerie and fun. 2315 K St.; (916) 409-7500; flamingohousesac.com



where the good stuff (Pappy Van Winkle bourbon, Louis XIII cognac) is displayed. Overhead, a couple of sparkling crystal chandeliers give the space a golden glow. The only deviation from the format is the music: Instead of Sinatra, it's fun, current and

jammy, designed to keep the party going.

Is this a bar that serves food, or a restaurant that serves cocktails? Actually, it's both. The kitchen, overseen by Hook & Ladder veteran Greg Pilapil, puts out approachable comfort food from the '50s: things like meatballs in

grape jelly, and Scotch deviled eggs that are crunchy and warm on the outside, cold and creamy inside. The garlic steak sandwich is killer.

The drinks menu is divided equally between "classics" and "originals." From the classic side, nods to the past include the Harvey Wallbanger and the Grasshopper, a vivid-green blended cocktail served in a copper coupe. Created by the staff, the originals have clever names like Bring Me the Shrubbery (gin, sparkling wine and a tangerine-and-elderflower shrub) and Wrongfully Accused (whiskey, Lillet Blanc and Jägermeister).

There are other fun touches, such as slushy machines that serve frosty White Linens and frozen rosé (known here as a Fro-sé). Martinis and Manhattans are served from a tiny cocktail shaker. A little bit of the drink is left behind in the shaker for the customer to pour like a diner milkshake. 1010 10th St.; (916) 272-2888; tentenroom.com