

# PROVIDENCE Journal

## A PROVIDENCE COCKTAIL DESTINATION RAISES THE BAR WITH ITS DINING MENU

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By Gail Ciampa, Journal Food Editor



The Providence Journal/David DelPoio

Homemade pita bread featured in the vegetarian tasting platter, smashed fingerling potatoes, grilled brussels sprouts, pickled seasonal fruits, nuts and olives.



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Specialty cocktail favorites at The East End include the rum-based Tuk-Tuk (left), Squash Blossom made with mescal and egg white (center) and the grain-alcohol drink Mukashinagara.

Gail Ciampa says that when she visited The East End with friends she not only reveled in the bar program, but was impressed with the food they ordered.

### PROVIDENCE

A funny thing happened on the way to make The East End the place to enjoy a wide variety of whiskeys; the kitchen paired wonderful food with all those cocktails.

I remember well the first reports from colleagues who went to The East End when it opened last June on Wickenden Street. They said it was all about the drinks.

That made perfect sense. The East End was opened by Gil MacLean, owner of Bottles, the liquor store at 141 Pitman St. in Providence, as part of his Bottles Group.

But when I visited the restaurant with friends I not only reveled in the bar program, but was impressed with the food we ordered. As I walked through the beautifully appointed restaurant, I saw lots of tempting dishes on every table, even though it was an early hour before 6, generally more of a drink than dinner time in urban bars.

It was designed as a bistro with an experienced chef in the kitchen, so it's not shocking people are eating at The East End. Still, it's been a pleasant surprise, said Kathryn McManus, director of marketing for the Bottles Group, which owns the bistro. So much so, the restaurant will begin accepting reservations on Jan. 8.

It's been beautifully renovated by star designer Kyla Coburn in a woody Victorian style with tables set on multi-levels a few steps up here and there and cozy booths around each corner. The bar is a stunner with elegant cabinetry holding hundreds of bottles including 300 whiskey selections. The ceilings are things of beauty and demand you look up at their wood designs.



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Arancini, a fried ball of risotto, with a light tomato sauce.



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Buttermilk and chili breaded chicken wings served daily with smoky blue cheese dressing.

It's in the space that was the Z Bar and sat vacant for too long on the busy street with many dining spots. There's a garden patio in the back for dining in warmer seasons.

The signature cocktail here is a concept named the Call & Response (\$14). Diners choose their favorite spirit, whether they want their drink shaken or stirred (very Bondesque) and offer an adjective. It can be descriptive, say citrus-y or dry, or more emotive as in joyful. It's always fun because bar manager Kayleigh Speck has a team that looks beyond the fruit juices to craft a drink with blends, bitters and garnishes to make a cocktail with personality.

There are also 40 wines available by the glass.

The East End, with its Bottles pedigree, has relationships with distilleries to create some amazing special events. One is planned for April — a Pappy Van Winkle Tasting and Ossabaw Island Hog Roast — with a flight of six expressions of the elusive bourbon, another should be announced soon to bring a distiller to town.



The Providence Journal/David DelPoio

The East End, located in what was once the Z Bar on Providence's Wickenden Street, has expanded with a dinner menu and will begin accepting reservations on Jan. 8.



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The bar boasts elegant cabinetry holding hundreds of bottles including 300 whiskey selections.

The menu changes monthly so what I enjoyed won't necessarily be available. In the case of the stracciatella, that is just too bad. It was a delicious fried cheese served with a light-as-air tomato sauce. But it has been replaced on the menu by savory arancini, a fried ball of risotto, and it's served with that excellent sauce. Hot wings are also on the January menu with a creamy dipping sauce.

Chef Emerson Bontecou has a nice touch with sauces and dips. He worked previously at New Rivers as well as at North Bakery, Pat's Pastured and Farmstead, the James Beard-nominated restaurant now gone from Providence's Wayland Square, where McManus also worked.



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A pina colada milk punch served at the bar.

What doesn't change is the offering of charcuterie boards with housemade pâtés and spreads, bacon and sausage and other cured meats. There are a variety of choices not just for the meats but for cheeses, and the boards are served with crispy bread slices, mustard and pickled vegetables. You can make a meal out of a good board. Choose any five for \$40 or three for \$26. The hummus platter is another winner.

The snacks range from nuts to tomato soup and grilled cheese, a storied pairing from everyone's childhood. For dinner, they also offer salads as well as platters, fish and chips and a vegetarian one, for example, for two or four people to share. There are burgers and fries (\$12), mac and cheese (\$12), moules frites (\$16) and enough comfort food to get anyone through what promises to be a long winter.

**DETAILS:** The East End, 244 Wickenden St., Providence, (401) 433-9770, [theeastendpvd.com](http://theeastendpvd.com) and on Facebook. Street parking. Open daily at 3 p.m. for drinks and snacks and at 5 p.m. for dinner.