



Sidebar: dangerously alluring food, cocktails

By Dominique Channell
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Most menus have a hook – a specialty item, or two, designed to make you curious. Interesting enough to lure you in off the sidewalk at least once to check out the new chowhouse that opened on your block. But Sidebar, a serious classic-cocktail joint that recently appeared on that interesting strip of Grand shared by Gold's Gym and Sunset Funeral Planners, has numerous tidbits of dangling bait that will keep you coming back to bite.

Take, for example, the duck liver crostini (\$7.50) served on toasted levain, the marscapone-manchego polenta cake (\$7), or the spring carrot soup with crème fraiche and lemon-chive oil (\$7). Even the classic burger can be made with a gooey fried egg on top (true food porn material: guys, order one for your date!). The menu runs the gamut from French bistro (steak frites, \$23) to Italian (baked pasta, \$12.50, and panini, \$7.50) to Mediterranean (lamb brochettes with tomatoes and tzatziki, \$18). But Sidebar's also snuck in some retro American comebacks. When was the last time you saw deviled eggs or an iceberg wedge on the menu? You'll find them at Sidebar, in addition to chopped salad, cole slaw, and good ol' mashed potatoes.

The friendly, cute bartenders know their spirit chemistry, too, and they have bona fide classic cocktail ingredients—like real gum syrup, made with gum arabic, and house-made bitters. Each perfect mixture is created in one of two versions: the Classicist (recipes derived from bartenders' manuals of the 19th and early 20th centuries) and the Locavore (with ingredients from local distilleries). I sampled the Clover Club (\$9), made with gin, raspberry syrup, vermouth and lemon juice, with a cloud of egg-white froth—heavenly and light—and I'll definitely be back for another.

Dominique is a writer and editor based in Oakland. She reviews restaurants for Lonely Planet Publications, and her articles have appeared in national and international newspapers. You may contact her at dchannell@channelledit.com or follow her on Twitter at [oakland_eats](https://twitter.com/oakland_eats).

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