



## Foodie Flashes May 29, 2015

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By Frank Sabatini Jr.

Restaurateur Johan Engman purchased **Western Steakburger** in North Park nearly a year ago to eventually bring an “Instagram-worthy” eatery to the neighborhood. His vision for [Breakfast Republic](#) will finally materialize in late June, now that the original owner of Western has ceased operations and entered into retirement.

“We’re doing a thorough remodel,” Engman said, revealing that the restaurant will serve both classic and uncommon breakfast fare from 7 a.m. – 3 p.m., daily. The redesign will feature front and back patios, an entrance wrapped in galvanized metal, and restrooms rigged with recordings of jokes and quotes that break randomly into songs. He’s also installing a 20-tap chrome beer tower, assuring that the suds will pair swimmingly to dishes such as s’mores french toast, Vietnamese chicken wing breakfast bowls and standard egg dishes.

“I want a restaurant that stands out for photo ops on Instagram and other social media,” added Engman, referring also to an exterior painting that will depict roosters escaping from a henhouse.

Engman’s portfolio consists of **Fig Tree Cafes** in three locations, including Hillcrest, plus **Café Cantata** in Del Mar. He said a lease has already been secured for a second Breakfast Republic in metro San Diego, but can’t reveal the details just yet. *2730 University Ave.*

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Construction is underway to the space that formerly gave reign to **R Gang Eatery** in Hillcrest. Its new tenants, beer consultant Beau Schmitt of **The Brew Project** and Mike Sill, who previously managed **Quality Social**, will open [The Brew Project House](#) in July.



(l to r) Mike Sill and Beau Schmitt begin work on their new brewery venture.  
(Courtesy The Brew Project)

“We’re pushing to be open before Pride, which is July 18,” said Schmitt, adding that he’s aiming for the style of “an old Victorian country house.”

The establishment will feature 28 handles devoted exclusively to San Diego craft beers. A cocktail program is also in the works along with a food menu flaunting salads, tortas and shareable plates. *3683 Fifth Ave.*, [thebrewproject.com](http://thebrewproject.com).

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The new **Burnside** in Normal Heights is a quaint sandwich shop with a big imagination. Launched recently by the owners of **Sycamore Den** two doors away, the menu takes on cosmopolitan flair with sandwiches such as Korean rib eye with kimchi; a Cubano made with pork belly; and the French-inspired “stinky grilled cheese” accented with braised leeks. Of the American-style offerings, there is buttermilk chicken or braised pot roast tucked into bread as well. The sandwiches can be consumed inside the eatery or while imbibing at Sycamore. *3373 Adams Ave.*

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Where other than San Diego for holding the [National Homebrewers Conference](#)? The event takes place June 11–13 at **The Town & Country Resort** in Mission Valley, although a few pre-events spotlighting our prolific beer scene are planned for locals and incoming brewers alike. The self-guided **Taste of North**, which occurs largely along the neighborhood’s 30th Street beer and food corridor, will be held from 5 – 8 p.m., June 9. On the following evening, June 10, **Waypoint Public** will host a three-course dinner paired to beers from Ballast Point Brewery. Seatings are at 7 and 8 p.m., and the cost is \$65. The activities extend to a North Park mobile beer hop, also to be held on June 10. The service welcomes all beer lovers to hop aboard free shuttles running every half hour (between noon and midnight) from the Town & Country. The route includes stops at **Toronado, Belching Beaver, Ritual Tavern, Hess Brewery** and other popular beer bars in the neighborhood. For more information visit [ahaconference.org](http://ahaconference.org) or [northparkmainstreet.com](http://northparkmainstreet.com).

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With the recent arrival of [El Charko Grill & Bar](#)’s progressive street tacos to Old Town, the long-established [El Agave Restaurant & Tequileria](#) located a block away is matching the competition with its own gourmet creations. New to the menu are duck tacos with cactus and fig jelly; crispy ahi tuna tacos served over Mexican rice; and salmon burritos wrapped in tomato tortillas. *2304 San Diego Ave., 619-220-0692.*



El Agave in Old Town has introduced gourmet tacos.  
(Courtesy El Agave Restaurant & Tequileria)

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Forget wine and beer. The folks at [S&M Sausage and Meat](#) in University Heights are going for the harder stuff at a four-course Journeyman Whiskey dinner to be held at the restaurant at 7 p.m., June 10. Reps from the lauded Michigan-based distillery will offer educational pours of several signature whiskeys that include Ravenswood Rye, Silver Cross and Featherbone Bourbon. The meal will feature smoked venison sausage, chipotle pork belly sliders, duck confit and more. Tickets are \$100 per person, which includes tax and tip. *4130 Park Blvd., 619-344-2177.*

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