

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**CONTACT:** Ryann Collier, rcollier@russell-shaw.com, 512-499-8009 ext. 302**Second Bar + Kitchen, Congress & Bar Congress Changing Downtown Scene**

AUSTIN, Texas – Three new eating and drinking establishments, Second Bar + Kitchen, Congress and Bar Congress, are expanding the Austin food and drink scene with inventive American cuisine and an extensive wine and cocktail program in an upscale, neighborhood setting.

The three opened at the end of 2010 on the ground floor of The Austonian, Austin's tallest residential high-rise located in the heart of downtown. They all share a management team, an executive chef, a kitchen and a commitment to creating extraordinary experiences for their guests.

The team behind all three is La Corsha Restaurant Partners, which reunites Jeff Trigger, David Bull, Scott Walker and Jeff Rhein, the key players behind the award-winning restoration of the historic Driskill Hotel. The team also worked together on The Driskill Grill, where Bull was executive chef and Walker ran the dining room and bar operation. Under Bull and Walker's leadership, the *Austin American-Statesman* recognized The Driskill Grill with its "Number One Restaurant Award" for three consecutive years.

Each of the three establishments offers the highest level of service, impeccable attention to detail, a focus on quality and a deep commitment to giving back to the community that supports them. The interiors, designed by Amber Lewis, gives each of the three spaces a distinctive look and feel that suits Austin and creates a vibrant destination. Multiple local art pieces, chosen by curator Roberto Ainslie, hang throughout and add to each establishment's local identity.

Scott Walker, vice president of operations, leads all three and sums up the team's philosophy when he says, "We want you to feel like you are in our home, and ensuring that all of our guests are comfortable, engaged, and taken care of, is truly important to us."

Second Bar + Kitchen: A Dynamic Downtown Destination

Second Bar + Kitchen is a dynamic and playful spot that is upscale enough for an exciting night out, yet comfortable and casual enough for a weekday lunch with business associates, friends or family.

On the menu, Executive Chef David Bull combines seasonal ingredients and local artisan products to create what he calls "Natural American" cuisine. Chef de Cuisine Ethan Holmes supervises the kitchen and the dining room is managed by Assistant General Manager Laura Shearer and Operations Manager Josh Palmer. The restaurant offers small plates for sharing, large plates for entrees, rotisserie selections, salads, sandwiches and pizzas.

House favorites include buffalo fried pickles, rotisserie chicken pizza, grilled radicchio and escarole salad, pepperoni soup (a Bull family recipe) and the Congress Burger. Diners willing to go all out can order the Congress Burger "double double all the way," which includes two fresh patties made from house ground brisket and chuck, double gruyere cheese, shallot confit, greens, horseradish pickles, over easy egg, avocado, smoked pork belly and seared foie gras. Combine that with an order of black truffle pomme frites served with pecorino and truffle aioli and that's a meal made for Texas.

Supporting Austin's local artisan food makers, the menu features a traditional charcuterie block from Kocurek Family Charcuterie; and burrata and oxtail marmalade served with brioche that sources the burrata from local favorite, Antonelli's Cheese Shop.

Guests can also choose from seasonally inspired desserts created by Pastry Chef Plinio Sandalio. And for anyone that doesn't want something big but still needs one sweet bite to finish the meal, Chef Sandalio has created a selection of a la carte dessert bites where diners can order just one or several to mix and match and share at their table.

From the bar, Second Bar + Kitchen offers craft and eclectic beers; an approachable wine program featuring local and organic labels; artisan and classic cocktails that utilize fresh fruit and juices and house-made ingredients; and zero proof selections that are free of high fructose corn syrup. Two well-established Austin favorites are responsible for the bar – Bar Manager Adam Bryan and Lead Barman Billy Hankey. Second Bar + Kitchen is also the only restaurant in Austin to offer house wines on tap – two reds including a merlot and cabernet sauvignon, and two whites including a chardonnay and sauvignon blanc, all from Sonoma vineyards. The wines on tap can be served by the glass or by the liter to share with friends.

When it comes to ambience, Second Bar + Kitchen offers different experiences for different moods. The space is multi-level with four distinct areas where guests can enjoy themselves. Two outside terraces on Second Street – an upper and a lower terrace – offer a fresh air dining experience amidst the energy of Austin’s vibrant Second Street District.

Inside, guests can choose to sit at booths or tables in the dining room for a business lunch or dinner with friends. A long bar stretching across one side of the dining room is the perfect spot for a cocktail or casual dining. Upstairs is an outdoor mezzanine overlooking Second Street known as the “Green Room,” which gets its name from a soft, thick carpet of artificial grass. Combined with teak tables, contemporary metal chairs, music and open air, the Green Room offers the perfect vibe for lounging while overlooking downtown. It’s also a great space for private events.

Guests can stop in Second Bar + Kitchen for lunch, happy hour, dinner and late-night cravings. Hours of operation include:

Lunch 11 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Dinner 4 p.m. – 12 a.m. during the week and until 2 a.m. Friday and Saturday

Second Bar + Kitchen accepts reservations for parties of six or more.

Bar Congress: A Lounge with Sophistication

Bar Congress is located in between Congress and Second Bar + Kitchen, and is a sophisticated artisan cocktail lounge and premium wine bar featuring a vast array of superior spirits and exclusive wines available by the glass. Managing the bar and developing the cocktail menus is expert cocktail craftsman Adam Bryan.

Many of the mixers are house made and since Bar Congress maintains a strong commitment to classically executed craft cocktails, there is no high fructose corn syrup anywhere to be found. A state-of-the-art, 16-bottle Enomatic Wine System makes it possible to offer a wide array of wines, ports and sakes by the glass. Bar Congress also has its own culinary menu, which is a combination of the two restaurants’ approaches.

The long bar is intimate and dimly lit, and evokes a pre-war vintage vibe. The bar itself is crafted from Italian marble and features hand-tooled basket weave leather crafted by local artists. Guests can also choose to sit outside in comfortable lounge chairs and sofas right on Congress Avenue with a view of the State Capitol building.

Bar Congress is the perfect destination for a cocktail with friends or associates, and it also serves as a relaxing lounge for guests that want a well-made drink, glass of wine or a beer before or after experiencing dinner at Congress.

Bar Congress is open five nights a week, Tuesday through Saturday from 5 p.m. until midnight.

Congress: An Exquisitely Intimate Dining Experience

Congress strives to offer guests nothing less than the finest culinary experience from start to finish. The restaurant features imaginative meals in an elegant and inviting space, presented with detailed and attentive service that is warm, welcoming and unpretentious.

Chef David Bull describes the prix-fixe menu as “Natural American” cuisine where he selects the highest-quality local and seasonal ingredients. Guests can choose from the three-course menu or the seven-course chef’s tasting menu, each presenting a refined interpretation of the very best products available each day. Chef de Cuisine Rebecca Meeker ensures every dish comes out perfectly executed by the team. Pastry Chef Plinio Sandalio presents a selection of inventive desserts designed to leave guests smiling and satisfied after a memorable meal.

Beverage Director and Sommelier June Rodil offers thoughtfully selected wine pairings as well as a comprehensive, premium wine list with more than 500 labels. And with two private dining rooms and a main dining room designed for exquisitely intimate service, Congress is the perfect spot for special occasions, celebrations and nights to remember.

Congress is open for dinner only, five nights a week, Tuesday through Thursday from 6 p.m. until 10 p.m., and Friday and Saturday from 6 p.m. until 11 p.m. Reservations are not required but are encouraged.

For more information on Congress, Second Bar + Kitchen or Bar Congress, please visit www.congressaustin.com or email info@congressaustin.com. Information is also available at www.facebook.com/CongressAustin or on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/CongressAustin>.

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