

# SANTÉ

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**15th**  
**Anniversary**  
**ISSUE**

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*Santé* celebrates 15 years in publication with a toast of Pol Roger Champagne, courtesy of Frederick Wildman & Sons, [frederickwildman.com](http://frederickwildman.com). Flutes by Anchor Hocking/Stolzle, [anchorhocking.com](http://anchorhocking.com).

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By Rob Costantino

# Setting the Standard:

## **EASTERN STANDARD KITCHEN & DRINKS**

528 Commonwealth Avenue  
Boston, Massachusetts  
617-532-9100  
easternstandardboston.com

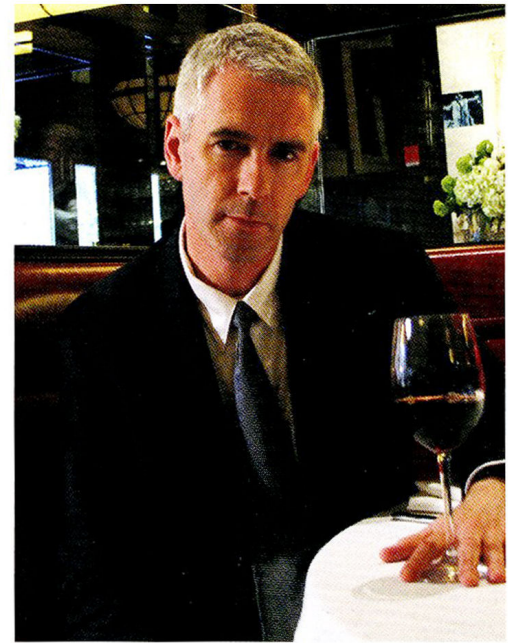
Proprietor Garrett Harker  
General Manager Andrew Holden  
Collaborating Chef Jeremy Sewall  
Wine Director Colleen Hein  
Bar Director Jackson Cannon  
Bar Manager Kevin Martin  
Principal Bartenders Nicole Lebedevitch, Kit Pascal  
Number of Bar Staff 14  
Average Drink Price \$10  
Signature Drink and Price Whiskey Smash \$10  
Pouring Cost 18.5%  
Average Bar Bill N/A  
Gross Annual Revenue, Restaurant \$7+ million  
Gross Annual Revenue, Bar \$1.75 million

## **In the six years since opening its doors**

in Boston's bustling Kenmore Square, Owner Garrett Harker's Eastern Standard Kitchen & Drinks (ES) has delivered an exceptional food and beverage experience to neighborhood denizens and out-of-towners alike. Operating nearly around the clock, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, ES is an almost continuous, full-service brasserie that has transformed Boston's dining and drinking scene and, filling a conspicuous void, has become a dynamic late-night destination.

Eastern Standard is impressive by every measure. Its wide and handsome street-side patio with crimson awning; spacious, high-ceiling dining room with white linen-covered dining tables; red-leather banquettes; polished wood high-tops; 46-foot, marble-topped bar; and large sepia-toned prints evoking Boston's pre-Prohibition Golden Age all work in harmony to create a sleek, warm, and welcoming space. Wait and bar staff glide about the floor with purposeful ease, seeing to each patron's needs with concern and grace. The 24-hour kitchen operation prepares charcuterie and bakes all of the restaurant's bread during the wee hours when it isn't consumed with breakfast, lunch, dinner, and late-night menu service. Well-staffed private cocktail and dining parties proceed during the daily flow of the regular service.





Left, Gin Flip. Above, Ricotta Fritters. Below, Flatbread and Pisco Sour. Right, Garrett Harker.

Year after year, local and regional media have bestowed praise and awards on the restaurant's culinary and wine offerings, overseen by Collaborating Chef Jeremy Sewall and Wine Director Colleen Hein, respectively, and for the guest-friendly, professional service headed by General Manager Andrew Holden. But in addition to local kudos, Bar Director Jackson Cannon's ambitious program also caught the attention of national media, making the "Best" lists of Esquire and GQ, among others, and garnering Santé's 2009 Spirits Hospitality Restaurant of the Year honor.

### Energy Booster

The ES bar program may be seen as the supercharger of the high-octane brasserie. In Harker's view, "...the bar's most valuable impact is as a source of energy in the room, an opportunity to demonstrate the integrity of the kitchen and restaurant, and an enduring arena where the city of Boston and beyond come to explore and engage with creative masters of their craft."

The bibulous exploration encompasses a wide array of top-flight beverages, including a carefully chosen list of craft beers and international brews and an equally thoughtful roster of mostly European by-the-glass wine offerings that change with the season to complement the cuisine. In addition, Cannon has tasted and selected several single-barrel whiskeys from the Buffalo Trace distillery for the bar, and offers a "Reserve" beer list of exceptional craft beers and large-format Belgian ales for sharing (magnum, jeroboam, and methuselah priced from \$65 to \$325).



**"...the bar's most valuable impact is as a source of energy in the room."**

*—Garrett Harker, Proprietor*

At the heart of the bar program is a cocktail menu populated by a broad choice of 40 classics and classic-inspired house creations grouped in categories. For example, under "Standards," customers can find Au Provence, a vodka gimlet with tarragon and fresh lime, and the most popular drink (more than 100 are prepared and served daily), the Whiskey Smash, both priced at \$10. Six tropical Pacific classics are listed under "Tikisms," including Vic's 1940s Scorpion Bowl (rum, pisco, citrus and orange) that is prepared for two, four, or six to share (\$22, \$45, \$65). "Sparklers," "Oeuf" (\$10 egg-centric concoctions such as Pink Lady), "Infusion," and "Mocktails" (all priced at \$6) are categories that offer four selections each. A short and clever description accompanies each cocktail, but the unconventional list practically demands a conversation between guests and bartenders.

Commenting on drinks pricing, Harker offers, "Some of the really high-touch bars in Boston can have \$15 cocktails; ES must be \$10-12 for a craft-constructed drink. Our volume helps mitigate what we give up in percentage cost. The bar is certainly important within the overall financial context. It helps us deliver great value on the food menu."

### Handmade Only

Harker, who earned his chops managing Barbara Lynch's celebrated No. 9 Park, developing the restaurant's esteemed cocktail program and





**Jackson Cannon's goal is to prepare every cocktail by hand and to deliver it to the customer within five minutes of the order.**

## Whiskey Smash

½ fresh lemon, quartered  
4 mint leaves  
1 oz simple syrup  
2 oz W.L. Weller Special Reserve Bourbon  
Mint sprig for garnish

Muddle lemon quarters, mint leaves, and simple syrup in mixing glass. Add bourbon and dry shake. Tea strain into lowball glass. Add crushed ice. Garnish with a mint sprig.

partnering with Lynch in other culinary ventures, envisioned a grand bar and bar menu grounded in classic drinks for Eastern Standard. "I was sure we would have to compromise," he admits, reasoning that handmade cocktails might be too much to expect at the high-volume brasserie bar. "But that's where Jackson Cannon came in, and he declared that not only would we not compromise, but we would go to the next level. He and his team went in the trenches and did it, and they haven't stopped for six years."

Cannon made it his goal to prepare every cocktail by hand and to deliver it to the customer within five minutes of the order. But instituting his vision first required finding "people with 'the disease.'" He explains, "I can teach anyone to make a Jack Rose. But for bartenders to be cool under fire, relentlessly kind to guests, and be there for their coworkers at 4:00 a.m., they have to bring that to the table."

In the beginning, he sought out known talent who practiced their craft at high-end cocktail bars on both sides of the Charles River, such as No. 9 Park on Beacon Hill and B-Side Lounge in East Cambridge. The current staff has evolved from hiring those with the right stuff who grow into the ES culture through an intensive staff-training program.

### High-Intensity Training

"Training staff is a collaborative effort between management, wait staff, bar representatives, and chefs," notes General Manager Holden. "At ES, we have an elevated core training team composed of senior staff that welcomes new members with orientation and curriculum. The senior staff member becomes a 'sponsor' and guides recruits through their first couple of months, teaching them food knowledge, detailed beverage information, and the

culture and service at ES. We integrate the cocktail program into everyday training by doing spirit and cocktail tasting in twice-a-day, preshift meetings."

Cannon describes bar staff training as "never ending." Before a new bartender is in uniform, he or she spends three weeks taking tests, practicing setting up and taking down, and studying products and procedures in small groups before and after a shift. The hires are then assigned to ever-greater challenging stations for the next two months before assuming a regular schedule and continuing education up to the six-month mark when they undergo a thorough evaluation.

Ultimately, Eastern Standard's success, including its acclaimed bar program, is the communal effort put in by Harker, Cannon, Holden, Sewall, and all of the people on their team. Harker insists, "Everyone extends themselves outside their comfort area. Jackson's top lieutenants work as floor managers one day a week, in street clothes, running food and clearing tables ES would be a shadow of itself if it was based just on my desire, aspirations, or talent. It's the team that never stops striving and challenging themselves. Every morning . . . I'm fired up because I get to go to work with such dynamic people."

**Rob Costantino**, a freelance spirits and wine editor and writer, is the former managing editor of *Santé* who now plays an editor-at-large role.