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Cocktails & Spirits Oakland's Plum Bar Ups the Cocktail Ante

By Lou Bustamante Wed., Nov. 23 2011 at 10:00 AM
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Lou Bustamante

Plum Bar

With the opening of Plum Bar, the new project adjoining Daniel Patterson's Plum Restaurant, Oakland has upped the cocktail ante.

The bar itself is the focus of the narrow space. The walls are tiled with pages from poetry books, and votive candles hang from the ceiling; the atmosphere is somewhere between lounge and bar, with a suggestion of speakeasy.

It's a comfortable space-- that is unless you're a group larger than two. Parties bigger than three should stake the tables up front or grab a stool at the bar, but otherwise the seating is designed for date nights. Having an uncomfortable pause in the conversation? What's more banter worthy-- and surprisingly not creepy or contrived-- than reading each other poetry from the walls?

The drink list features about a dozen cocktails (\$9.50-\$11.50) by barman Scott Beattie and bar manager Michael Lazar all utilizing local, seasonal, and even some foraged ingredients.

Most, if not all, are exceptional with evenhanded distribution of classic cocktails along with the inventive originals that Beattie is renowned for. The **Pineapple Guava Margarita** (\$11.50, Tres Agaves Blanco Tequila, pineapple guava, lime, agave nectar) is refreshing with a mildly tropical fragrance, while the **Costal Collins** (\$11.50, St. George Terroir Gin,

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Lou Bustamante

The Pineapple Guava Margarita

salt that hints at vadouvan or curry.

The **Quinoa Fritters** (\$5), fried lengths of quinoa logs nestled into a lettuce leaves with a lightly spiced chile relish is a verse told in vegetables. There is heartier fare on the menu, like a burger (\$14) and grilled cheese (\$12), but the snacks and bites provide the most inspiration for the lyrical.

Plum Bar, 2216 Broadway (at Grand), Oakland

Lou Bustamante tweets at @thevillagedrunk. Follow SFoodie at @sfoodie, and like us on Facebook.

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lemon, agave, huckleberry, bay laurel) is a hike in the redwoods with Tom Collins.

Don't leave without getting to know **The Croatian** (\$10.50, Germain-Robin Craft Method Brandy, Old World Spirits Black Walnut Liqueur, Cocchi Americano vermouth, Cointreau), that sips like concentrated fall in a glass.

Plum is well known for cuisine that rides a line between rustic and intellectual with a playful edge, and chef Ron Boyd's bar menu feels like a natural extension of that ideal. His **Beef Tendon Chicharrones** (\$6) are perfectly puffed strips of meaty cotton candy that crunch with each bite then vanish with a trace of beefy essence. You'll find a vegetarian equivalent in the **Corn Chips** (\$4), puffed strips of dried corn mixture sprinkled with a spiced

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