

Ball & Biscuit is a modern-day speakeasy

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It's a brand new space in a brand new building, yet Zach Wilks and Trevor Belden got what they wanted when they asked designer Matty Bennett to create a bar which evoked memories of America's speakeasy days.



Co-owners Trevor Belden and Zach Wilks amid their newly created pre-Prohibition ambiance on Mass Ave.

There are old radios and a wall of historic microphones. And one uniquely shaped English microphone which garnered it the nickname of "ball and biscuit."

Which, in turn, has given a name to Mass Ave's newest pub, the Ball & Biscuit, newly opened at 331 Mass Ave, the first commercial venture in the street-level space of 3 Mass Condos. Dominated by the brick wall with purposely careless mortaring (which was difficult to convince the craftsmen to do, Bennett said), the space is also conspicuous for what it has not - televisions. "It's almost as if the conversation was being retrieved from a simpler, more civilized time," they said.

Conversation yes, smoking no.

Belden, an attorney, and Wilks, a veteran bartender, said they partnered in The Ball and Biscuit out of a shared interest in enriching Downtown Indy's nightlife culture. They call the space they have created with Bennett "a comfortably worn-in environment." No detail has been spared their attention, from the 150-year-old quarter-sawn wood floors and wall claddings to the distressed leather chairs; to the way the gas-glow from hand-blown, tungsten-filament pendant bulbs diffuses across the ceiling.

The liquor menu features craft beers, hand-picked wines, and unique cocktails - some taken straight from a Prohibition-era speakeasy. Others, such as the bacon-infused Hamhattan, are concocted with just a splash of modern flair. The Biscuit also offers bar food "that has more in common with a Lost Generation brasserie than your average sports bar," they said. The limited menu, designed and catered by veteran chef Brad Gates, includes gourmet cheeses and made-from-scratch artichoke dip.

Wilks is doubling as the on-site manager, using skills he picked up managing and tending bars from The Red Room to The Oceanaire Seafood Room. It's a tour of duty that won him Nuvo Magazine's "Best Bartender" award three years in a row. The Ball & Biscuit is open daily from 4 p.m. to 3 a.m.

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