



Inside Laureate, a Swanky New Hotel Bar in Laurel Heights

The Laurel Inn's new watering hole replaces the old Swank

by [Caleb Pershan](#) | Aug 15, 2018, 5:08pm PDT

Photography by [Patricia Chang](#)

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The Laurel Inn's old bar, Swank Lounge, just got a lot swankier. Under the new name **Laureate**, the Joie de Vivre hotel watering hole at 444 Presidio is wreathed in a new, modern look, with an upgraded bar program to match.

"We knew that everyone in the neighborhood had *been* to Swank," says Shel Bourdon, Two Roads Hospitality's National Director of Bars, whose last SF project was [revamping the Hotel Kabuki's bar in Japantown](#). The problem: They'd been just once, maybe twice, and never returned.

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"That was the catalyst for the new design," says Bourdon. The goal was to make the bar feel like a place to linger, an extension of a friend's living room — assuming that friend had expensive taste in trendy, mid-century furniture. San Francisco-based RPM Studio redesigned the 1,100-square-foot lounge. That's floor-to-ceiling terrazzo tile on the fireplace, and groovy artwork by Lindsey Mortensen of Larsen & Lund on the walls.

Now, Bourdon says, "it's this little oasis."



A spread in the lounge area



Nooks in the bar area

Every oasis needs a great bar program, and Laureate doesn't plan to rest on its good looks alone.

"What's unique about us is we're putting a touch of California in everything," says bar manager Sam McGinnis, who will be recognizable to one-time and more loyal Swank patrons (of which there were reportedly a few). Drinks like a Smoke Show (with jalapeno infused Altos Tequila, Del Maguey Vida Mezcal, lime, raspberry syrup, and pomegranate) even include local salt — S.F. Salt Co. Smoked Cherry Salt, to be precise.

Other cocktails are twists on SF classics, like a Fog City Brew that's sort of like a cold version of the Buena Vista's Irish Coffee: Casa Magdalena Rum, Redbreast 12, local cold brew, cinnamon, coconut cashew milk, and falernum.

The whole menu, with beer and wine, is below. And bar snacks are available, too: Spreads are \$6 to 10 and include bacon wrapped dates, warm olives, shrimp ceviche, and spinach artichoke dip with SF sourdough.



A Presidio Mule



Living room at LaReate



Mid-century modern furniture at LaReate



Terrazo tile on the fireplace



Looking onto the bar area



Another view on the bar at La Roche



Bar manager Sam McGinnis makes a Smoke Show



Pomegranate seeds garnishing a Smokeshow



Sam McGinnis behind the bar at Laureate



Cocktails at Laureate



Devilled eggs and other bites are available at the bar



Dips like spinach and artichoke dip at Laureate



Shrimp ceviche



Another view on the lounge at Laureate