

The Cascade Room is the latest restaurant owned and designed by David Nicolay and Robert Edmonds, of Evoke International Design.

Home brew

The Cascade Room, a new pub in the Vancouver area once known as Brewery Creek, brings a touch of nostalgia to the up-and-coming neighbourhood.

— By Janet Collins





It's official: Vancouver's Mount Pleasant neighbourhood is, well, pleasant again. In fact, the area (once known as Brewery Creek, due to the number of breweries in the area) is downright hip. The community around the intersection of Broadway and Main (currently known by the moniker SoMa, as in South Main) was once characterized as working class, but has undergone a process of gentrification that started in the early 1990s and sped up in the last couple of years. Today, trendy fashion and home decor boutiques, many featuring lines by local designers, have taken over a neighbourhood that was getting rather down-at-heel.

SoMa is also fast becoming one of the port city's favourite dining areas, thanks to equally hip eateries opening apace. David Nicolay and Robert Edmonds are among the restaurateurs enjoying the neighbourhood's new cachet. In fact, the pair have enjoyed so much success with their first SoMa dining venture – Habit – that when space became available next door, they opened a 100-seat pub/restaurant that fits nicely with the area's fashionable present incarnation, while paying homage to its working-class past.

That Nicolay and Edmonds opted to convert the 2,700-square-foot former coffee house space into a loungey pub is not surprising. In addition to being seasoned restaurateurs (they owned eatery Tangerine, in Kitsilano, B.C., before opening Habit), the pair are principals of Evoke International Design, the team behind such successful Vancouver restaurant designs as Glowbal, Afterglow, and Coast. As

such, Evoke's latest project – The Cascade Room – is part of an ongoing experiment of not only providing design services to a growing clientele, but also stepping into the role of client itself.

"With the Cascade Room, we pretty much gutted the space and started with a blank slate," says Nicolay. The goal was to bring a pub-like atmosphere – an environment conducive to mingling, indulging and being entertained – to the neighbourhood. And with two of the venture's partners hailing from the U.K., there was plenty of "real" pub experience thrown into the mix. "We wanted the place to look 'lived in', not over-designed," Nicolay adds. "Exposing the 16-inch old-growth roof joists certainly helped with that."

Everything about the room focuses on what's happening inside the space. "It's a bit introverted," says Nicolay.

The invitation to look inward begins at the main entrance, which is flanked by large overhead glass doors that open up the front lounge space and patrons to the street. Inside, the room is dominated by a 24-foot-long bar of reclaimed end-grain wood that connects the raised dining areas, near the front, to the semi-private dining lounge positioned near the kitchen at the back. Even though the room is divided into a number of different areas – booths, table seating, bar, semi-private dining lounge – the desire to see and be seen (one of the reasons folks enjoy dining out) is maintained thanks to open sightlines. This is achieved through installing bar area seating that is the same height as the bar, and using a low wall to

separate the semi-private dining lounge from the main room. The ubiquitous semi-open kitchen pulls the working part of the pub/restaurant into the diners' experience as well.

Dark woods and built-in furnishings enhance the casual yet intimate pub. A punch of warm colour is provided by the overlaid design of the vintage wallpaper in the dining lounge, drawing customers deeper into the room. The booths allow for a private dining feel – much like the snugs found in pubs in Old Blighty – while the bar seating offers maximum flexibility for groups.

Further nods to the classic British pub can be found in the carefully chosen graphic elements that add a modern punch to the room. The wartime motto "Keep Calm and Carry On," emblazoned on posters hung in many a U.K. watering hole, has been given an updated treatment at the Cascade Room, fashioned into an etched-glass divider near the main entry. Similarly, the de rigueur portrait of the queen – in this case Victoria – makes an appearance, not as a stuffy picture on the wall, but rather as a graphic design on the colourful light fixtures that hang over the booth tables.

Given the level of customer activity, the Cascade Room is proving to be a popular addition to the SoMa scene. So much so that a local brewery has relaunched the beer that provided the pub/restaurant with its name and identity. Now, once again, those thirsting for a bit of nostalgia can sip a cool Cascade while sitting in the comfort of a cozy pub near Brewery Creek. **CI**

Cascade is cozy, with warm dark wood, punched up with colour provided by vintage wallpaper and bright yellow shades on the pendant lamps. A distinctive British feeling is created with elements like the Queen Victoria portraits, which decorate the aforementioned lamps, and the "Keep Calm and Carry On" motto, etched into glass in the main entrance.



KEEP
CALM
AND
CARRY
ON

The image shows a close-up of a glass entrance door or partition. A large, white, sans-serif text "KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON" is etched onto the glass. Above the text is a white silhouette of a crown. To the right, a bright yellow cylindrical pendant lamp hangs from the ceiling, featuring a black silhouette of a crown and a gear. The background shows a dimly lit interior with wooden beams and a bar area.