



For Immediate Release

Contact:

Jacqueline Hanson

jacqueline@hansonpr.com

952-941-3949

Barrio Sets the “Tequila” Bar *Irreverent, Upscale Bar Opens August 26*

Minneapolis, Aug. 25, 2008 – Diver Scallop Ceviche. Tequila-Cured Salmon. Barbecue Pork Sopes with Habanero-Pickled Onions. This is “bar food?” It is when the bar is Barrio and the management team includes award-winning restaurateurs, Josh Thoma and Chef Tim McKee.

The Twin Cities’ dynamic duo is at again opening their fourth restaurant – and their second this year. While officially Barrio is being positioned as a “tequila bar,” McKee and Thoma approached it the same way as they’ve approached all their projects; lots of attention to detail with service to match, menu items that feature top quality ingredients and fresh, authentic flavors; all offered up in a complementary setting. And this time around, they’re adding a few surprises and a bit of sass to the mix.

Barrio will showcase more than 100 tequilas and mezcals, but expect that number to grow as they discover new gems to add to the collection. (For the non-tequila aficionado, all liquors distilled from any agave plant are “mezcal,” but only those made from the blue agave are called tequila.) Patrons will have the option of ordering “Compadres” to complement their tequila order. These are a selection of chasers or sides designed to enhance the experience of the distinctive liquor. A few of Barrio’s “Compadres” include, Spicy Grapefruit, Pineapple Lime, Cilantro-Tomato Water, Melon and Ginger/Apple. Look for them under names such as “Night of the Iguana,” “Treasure of the Sierra Madre” or simply, “Eastwood.”

Johnny Michaels, one of the city’s star mixologists, designed the drink menu, and continues the playful theme with intriguingly christened cocktails, such as “The Good, The Bad and the Ugly” consisting of tequila with tamarind cinnamon cola, or “Cobra Verde” a cherry lime margarita with a touch of absinthe.

Barrio is designed by Shea, Inc. Founder, David Shea, and his team clearly had fun with the project. “It’s not Mexican. It’s not American. It’s all those things blended together,” explains Shea. “It’s a cultural festival with a twist.”

-more-

The space itself is not large, seating roughly 100 people on the main floor, seasonal outdoor seating along Nicollet Mall and second floor mezzanine combined, but it's packed with personality.

The décor mixes iconic and irreverent south-of-the-border elements. A large hand-made, wrought-iron stand holds tiny votive candles where guests can light a candle and make a wish. Salvaged railings and balustrades add an aged, been-there-for-decades character to the space. Dark red walls set off a hand-painted mural of a bull fight by Juxtaposition artist, Roger Cummings, and three Mexican marionettes dance from the ceiling in front of the expansive bar. Shea donated a bull's head he owned to accent the bar's logo which hangs from the mezzanine railing. The back hallway is lined with '40s and '50s pin-ups. The bar has the requisite TV monitor, but this one is tuned to bullfights, soccer and Mexican wrestling.

Another twist to the usual McKee/Thoma endeavor, is that this time while they're investors in Barrio, the bar is actually the brainchild of business partner/owners, Tim Rooney, a local real-estate developer, and Ryan Burnet, a partner in both Chambers and W Minneapolis – The Foshay.

Rooney and Burnet are responsible for bringing the various players together and allowing the concept to evolve. According to Burnet, they initially approached McKee, the James Beard Award-nominated chef, with the request to create a bar menu that included, "some tacos and guacamole." While you might think the four-star chef would be affronted, he loved it.

"I approached the menu the same way I would for any of our restaurants," said McKee. "This is the type of cuisine I absolutely love, but never have an opportunity to cook. The cuisines of Latin America have fresh, bright, bold flavors, and it's great to finally have a venue where I can showcase them."

Barrio's kitchen is being run by newly appointed executive chef, Bill Fairbanks. Fairbanks has worked with McKee for the last six years, first at Solera then at La Belle Vie. McKee tapped him for the post because he knew Fairbanks shared his love for Latin street food. Together they developed a menu inspired by the cuisines of Brazil, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, and Puerto Rico.

The casual and affordable menu has three sections, Small Plates priced at \$7.50, Tacos and Enchiladas ranging in price from \$3.50 to \$4 and Larger Plates ranging from \$16 to 22. McKee is reluctant to select favorites. As he explains with a smile, "Bill and I created them. They're all my favorites." That said, he does expect the Crab Empanadas with salsa verde and avocado and the Potato Sopos with goat cheese and red-chile tomatillo salsa to be crowd favorites. He also encourages guests to check out the Spicy Crab Soup with cumin, cilantro and lime and notes the Fried Mahi Mahi Taco is "the best."

-more-

Location and Hours of Operation

Barrio opens at 5 p.m. Tue., Aug. 26. The bar is located at 925 Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis, Minn., in the former Dunn Bros. location. Hours: (*Barrio will open for lunch starting Sept. 2.*) Bar Hours are 11 a.m. to 1 a.m. Monday through Thursday, 11 a.m. to 2 a.m. Friday, 4 to 2 a.m. Saturday and 4 p.m. to midnight Sunday. Happy Hour is 4 to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday. Dinner is 5 to 10 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 5 to 9 p.m. Sunday. Late night menus are available from 10 p.m. to 1 a.m. Monday through Saturday and 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. on Sunday.

Barrio Tequila Bar & Café

925 Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis

www.barriotequila.com (coming soon.)

612.333.9953

###