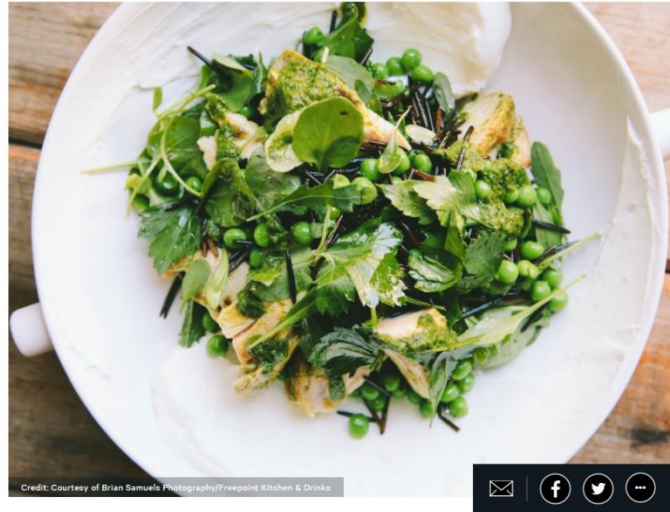


6 Things to Know About Freepoint Kitchen & Cocktails

CAMBRIDGE HAS A HIP NEW HOTEL RESTAURANT ON ITS HANDS



May 2, 2017 · by Scott Kearnan

The April opening of Cambridge's new Freepoint Hotel wasn't just good news for business travelers; locals can now check into a buzzing new lobby restaurant, **Freepoint Kitchen & Cocktails**, with a popular chef attached, a bold bar program underway and a comfy, contemporary interior that includes a glass-enclosed "secret garden" for alfresco noshing. Here's what to know before you head over.

220 Alewife Brook Parkway, Cambridge; 617-491-8000



Courtesy of Freepoint Kitchen & Cocktails



Courtesy of Brian Samuels Photography/Freepoint Kitchen & Cocktails

It's a Cambridge return (and reunion) for a popular chef

Freepoint tapped chef Matthew Gaudet, who previously married New England and French cuisines to marvelous effect at West Bridge, his acclaimed Cambridge restaurant that closed in 2015. Gaudet subsequently relocated to the North Shore, where he opened his more casual Manchester-by-the-Sea restaurant **Superfine Food** last summer. But he's happy to be back in his old stomping grounds. "I actually used to live right up the street from where Freepoint is," says Gaudet. "There weren't a lot of places to eat in that part of town, so I think it's a pretty cool addition to the area." This awesome arrival, which features a 10-seat bar in Harvard Crimson colors, lounge and banquette seating and custom video art projections, also reunites Gaudet with Alex Howell, West Bridge's former "beverage consigliere"; more on Howell's cocktail contributions in a moment.

It's not the chef's only new project

Just a brief detour before we continue: Freepoint isn't Gaudet's only new project. He's also slated to open a second location of Superfine in Marblehead, gunning for a July opening. This location will have a bigger kitchen, which will allow Gaudet to introduce a pasta program. He's also planning for a patio space that could seat up to about 40, and is toying with the idea of introducing an outdoor tiki/raw bar too. Get super-pumped.

He's (not) cooking with gas heat

Gaudet says his menu was shaped in part by the parameters offered by Freepoint's kitchen. He can't cook with gas, instead using combination ovens and various high-tech gadgetry. But he still found ways to come up with pretty impressive large and small plates — like these chicken wings painted with a gochujang barbecue sauce, speckled with sesame seeds and cilantro, and served with a side of marinated cucumber and carrot salad. A finer twist on the "old-school stick of celery and carrot" that comes with wings, chuckles Gaudet.



Courtesy of Brian Samuels Photography/Freepoint Kitchen & Cocktails



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The casual international cuisine includes a nod to West Bridge

Gaudet says he wanted to go global for his flavor inspirations, and he certainly succeeded. Menu highlights include green harissa-braised chicken with peas and wild rice labneh, shrimp cocktail with French gribiche sauce and this spicy broccoli dish loaded with toasted pumpkin seeds, slices of green apple and "tons of chile," said Gaudet. The broccoli is also served with a confit garlic-miso sauce that Gaudet used in several dishes at West Bridge, a nod to his last nearby venture.

It's breakfast and dinner only

We hate to disappoint, but if you're looking for a lunch break, look elsewhere. Owing to the heavy traffic of hotel guests, most of whom will be out and about midday, Freepoint is focusing on breakfast and dinner service only. But it's worth stopping by for some of those AM eats, which include this Dutch baby pancake with raspberry-blueberry sauce and lemon crème fraîche.



Courtesy of Brian Samuels Photography/Freepoint Kitchen & Cocktails

The bar emphasizes bourbons

Gaudet says he worked hand-in-hand with Howell to devise a beverage program that would best complement the food. Though there are plenty of other spirits, the pair ultimately landed on a decision to create a "bourbon-based bar," says Gaudet. The cocktail menu includes eight different variations of the Manhattan, and there's even what Gaudet calls a "choose your own adventure option": Guests can, with expert guidance, choose from among several different whiskey, rye or bourbon bases, and then add on different combinations of vermouths and bitters. On the culinary side, you'll find the bar's direction reflected in this dish of whiskey-cured salmon with toasted rye and sambal date sauce.