

While beer and bar food has been created and overstated with gluttonous consumptions of cheap beer and smothered buffalo wings, Arizona State University alumnus and restaurateur, Julian Wright, has mastered the energy of a bar infused with high quality comfort foods with his newest concept Handlebar & Grill.



After graduating from ASU, Wright spent time traveling. While the Virgin Islands, Chicago, Ill., Boulder, Colo., and Denver, Colo., showed appeal, Wright settled in Arizona in 1997 to pursue his dream in the restaurant industry. Three years later, he opened La Bocca Urban Pizzeria and Wine Bar on Mill Avenue in Tempe, Ariz. The hip, quaint spot, has become a favorite among locals for its specialty gourmet pizzas and famous bruschetta planks complimented with a glass of wine from an extensive list they offer.

"I decided to open my first bar on Mill Avenue because that is where I found a fitting location when looking around the Valley," Wright says. "Also, I had some familiarity with the area and just stuck around ever since."

In October 2010, Wright opened a new concept in the Mill Avenue District on the corner of 6th Street and Mill Avenue. Canteen Modern Tequila Bar is a sophisticated indoor-outdoor bar that provides a laid back atmosphere, in a chic, yet charming, environment. High quality dishes and more than 100 kinds of pure blue agave tequilas and custom drinks; Canteen has become a local hotspot for happy hour and transforms into a favorite nightclub after dinner hours.

Handlebar & Grill infuses both of Wright's successful concepts.

"I wanted it to be somewhere in the middle where it had more energy than La Bocca, but you could still talk," Wright says.

The bar and grill, which opened mid-September, entwines a European beer garden in a relaxed atmosphere for Tempe locals. Located at 680 South Mill Avenue, Handlebar is a contemporary bicycle-friendly full bar, adorned with rustic wood and brick with an urban, pacific northwestern appeal.

While it is conveniently tucked away next to popular spots like Fat Tuesdays and Cue Club, Handlebar is sure to stand out.

Stocked with a draft beer selection of European, local and American crafts beers and thirteen wine selections, the loungey 2,000 square foot hangout has a city park vibe. The minimalistic, yet relaxing ambiance creates a cozy feel with its reclaimed wood and high ceilings.

Smells of local, gourmet sausages and burgers is what attracts patrons. With hand-cut fries and Belgium pretzels accompanied with an array of dipping sauces, Handlebar attracts an eclectic crowd and has become particularly popular amongst ASU students and graduates. Tempe locals can enjoy their brats and beers on the extensive outdoor patio with roomy benches, lighted trees and hooks designed for customers to hang their bikes.

"Beer is hot right now," Wright says.

The restaurant entrepreneur has become a master of his craft. The restaurant and bar has already been a success, however, Wright says, "We never stop pushing forward."

If you go:

680 South Mill Ave., Tempe

Monday through Sunday 11 a.m. to 2 a.m.

Happy Hour: 3 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

(480) 474-4888

www.handlebaraz.com/