



Aaron Hatle and Brian Poynter uncorked Englewood's Whiskey Biscuit earlier this year with longtime friend Al Courtney.

Photo by Peter Jones

SPOTLIGHT ON BUSINESS

Another hearty round of Whiskey Biscuits

BY PETER JONES
NEWS EDITOR

"I feel like God kissed me with a mouthful of scotch."

So said one satisfied customer at the Whiskey Biscuit, an Englewood eatery that has seamlessly blended the best of two worlds, as suggested by the restaurant's title.

Biscuits and gravy, and its imaginative extensions, are half of the story, and when three brunch-loving former bartenders get together, the whiskey is bound to pour—and not just into glasses.

Ever try whiskey barbecue sauce? Whiskey-glazed bacon? Whiskey doughnut dipping sauce?

"We didn't want people to think we were another diner, so we went with 'whiskey.' We didn't want people to think we were just another bar, so we added the 'biscuit,'" explained Aaron Hatle, who founded the so-named restaurant this year with friends Brian Poynter and Al Courtney.

The trio has taken its breakfast-for-dinner concept to new levels—from Bloody Mary-inspired eggs Benedict to a steak-and-french-toast combo—with hearty twists on American classics and bartender-

fueled comfort food.

There is a wide-ranging brunch menu on weekends.

"Brunch is such a fun culture," Hatle said. "People are either in a really good happy mood because they're just starting the day, or they're just recovering from last night—either way, they've got a good story."

Among the more popular items on the regular Whiskey Biscuit menu is the fried-chicken biscuit with sliced heirloom tomato, shaved jalapeño, cheddar cheese and roasted garlic aioli.

Add to that some french-toast-battered onion rings, served with whisky barbecue sauce. Wash it all down with a bourbon strawberry-basil cocktail or a blackberry jalapeño margarita.

Another personal favorite of Hatle's—the mushroom ragout served with pappardelle pasta and cherry tomatoes in a bourbon cream sauce—with veggie, steak or whatever other options might strike a diner's fancy.

"That's one of the nice things about our menu, including our desserts—go ahead and add bacon to it, or a fried egg," the co-owner suggested.

The menu can take some getting used to, but the Whiskey Biscuit's reinventions—even from the foundational American school lunchroom—have proven to bridge the generations.

"Our idea was Grandma and Grandpa could come in with their millennial hipster grandchildren and see things they recognize, and the young people could find something that's a little bit out there," Hatle said.

Take the jalapeño and peanut-butter-and-jelly tater tots, for example.

"We decided to add some variations," the co-owner said. "So we brought on the mac-and-cheese tots, which we also put bacon on, and then there's the green-chili tots."

Earlier this year, the Whiskey Biscuit's fried-bologna sandwich caught the attention of *The Villager*. Although no longer on the regular menu, this variation on a lunchbox classic is expected to return as a special.

The restaurant's menu is unusual enough that there is actually a section called "somewhat regular sandwiches."

"If we had let [chefs] Jeremy and Nate just do whatever they wanted, we would have had some crazy, crazy stuff," Hatle said. "We wanted to mesh this unique kind of craziness with some comfort-style foods."

The Whiskey Biscuit, which opened March 1, is among the latest entries to a re-emerging section of Englewood's South Broadway just north of Hampden Avenue. Although once dormant of life, new bars

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and restaurants, as well as a brewery and a distillery, have recently joined the neighborhood, whose his-toric Gothic Theater has been the main attraction for years. Hatle, a former Englewood resident, want-ed the Whiskey Biscuit to be part of it, moving into a historical building that has variously housed a small grocery store and a car dealership.

“We came back here and kind of rediscovered what Englewood was doing,” he said. “We fell in love with this building and realized we couldn’t just do a bar. We had to go all out. This is on the verge of becoming one of the next destination neighborhoods.”

And lastly, do the biscuits contain whiskey?

Not really is the simple answer.

“We tried some rye. We tried a couple of different things and it just wasn’t working out,” Hatle said. “But we do whiskey-glaze our bacon in-house. We have bourbon ice cream.”

Breakfast for dinner or vice versa—french toast and steak.

Photos by Peter Jones

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-Aaron Hatle, co-owner, The Whiskey Biscuit



The biscuit and the whiskey: The cornerstones of the new restaurant’s menu.

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