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## Gourmet cocktail party

**ERNEST A. JASMIN; The News Tribune**

Eve Adams and husband Jonathan Miles envisioned Six Olives as the lounge equivalent of Farrell's.

While that old-fashioned ice cream parlor became known for its massive, sugary confections, the emphasis at Six Olives - which opened this spring at 2708 Sixth Ave. - is equally festive, elaborate and often dessertlike cocktails.



RUSS CARMACK | THE NEWS TRIBUNE

Eve Adams of Six Olives shows off her signature items, including the 15-Minute Vacation, left, served in a 32-ounce glass and garnished with sand and sunglasses.

Adams is a self-described "mixologist" (don't say bartender) who treats liqueurs as spices as she crafts the frothy cocktails that have become her fledgling establishment's main draw.

A partition divides the bar from the dining room, a detail that throws off customers used to being able to pull up a bar stool. "It was designed so we could handcraft the cocktails," Adams said. "Literally, when I handcraft a cocktail back there it's like a chef preparing a meal."

Adams tests her mouthwatering potions repeatedly at private parties or by doling out free samples to regulars before they make it onto the menu. ("I have a lot of people willing to be my guinea pigs," Adams quipped.) The most decadent creations are capped with glacial piles of whipped cream or garnished with "candy straws" (actually Twizzlers.)

Even the glasses underscore the owners' meticulous attention to detail, especially when it comes to the "size matters" portion of the menu. "We wanted our glasswork to be very different," Miles said.

Skyscrapers arrive in towering, cylindrical vials. The aptly named Swimming Pool - a modified Blue Hawaiian - comes in a wide-rimmed 26-ounce vessel that one could easily imagine some Lilliputian swimming laps in.

But even the latter is somewhat dwarfed by the titanic 15-Minute Vacation, a piña colada that's infused with Gosling's Black rum. The 32-ounce glass, which could easily double as a vase, is on a sandy plate with sunglasses. "Share it with a friend if you don't want to fly alone," the menu reads.

"We want to make it a fun experience for an adult," Adams said of all the whimsical details. "Six Olives to me is a cocktail party. And when you go to a nice cocktail party,

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you get high-end, quality liquor and fabulous appetizers."

Six Olives specializes in small plates, many of them enough to whet modest appetites on their own.

A combination of two or more can serve as a meal. The combo of Chicken Naan'wich - grilled chicken breast on Indian naan bread with sun-dried tomatoes, Swiss cheese and white wine marinade - and Fries Nirvana - an ample portion of fries tossed with white truffle oil, garlic, parsley and Parmesan cheese - is hearty enough to satisfy most appetites.

Among the most popular items is the praline salmon, a 3-ounce cut of fresh salmon seasoned with a sweet, spicy praline sauce. Like many of Adams' drinks, it was born at a cocktail party she and her husband attended. "John came home and said if we don't do that for the lounge he would quit," Adams recalled.

Then there is the lounge's namesake, six stuffed olives served on a small skewer. It was Adams' reaction to people's assumption that the Six Olives name alluded to the size of the martini the restaurant would serve.

Given Adams' conservative view of the classic cocktail ("There is only one martini," she says), she was inspired to come up with the popular appetizer. "We switch them as time goes by," she said of the olive stuffers, which often include blue cheese, jalapeños, garlic, mushrooms, almonds and the classic pimento.

Adams and Miles have a yin and yang sort of partnership. Adams is the tall, loquacious redhead, a social butterfly whose eyes light up when asked to recall her days of sneaking into New York's infamous nightclub Studio 54 as a '70s club kid.

Miles, a black man with glasses and a salt and pepper beard, is the more subdued half. He is content to melt into the background; he focuses on subtle details such as the venue's stylish lighting and the videos (Diana Krall, B.B. King) that play on a wide video screen that hangs from the ceiling.

The pair met eight years ago when both worked at El Toro. Miles was in charge of music while Adams ran the bar.

Not only did romantic sparks fly, but the two realized they had similar business interests. They launched a karaoke business, Tacoma Karaoke, which blossomed into consulting gigs aimed at revitalizing struggling nightclubs.

But that wasn't enough in the long run. They wanted their own place. "It was a matter of having done it so long for other people we felt we couldn't do it any more," Miles said.

Their initial foray into ownership was Eve's on the Ave, the cozy karaoke joint they opened back in 2000 in the same space their lounge now occupies.

But even that was never meant to be a long-term arrangement.

The couple originally planned to sell the business and open a lounge in a more exotic locale, like Las Vegas or New Orleans.

"We weren't sure if Tacoma was ready for this concept," Adams said. But the pair was inspired to stay by Tacoma's recent renaissance - which includes the opening of two art museums and more upscale restaurants - and affection for this region.

Six Olives' walls are painted in tastefully muted tones and adorned with framed keepsakes from the couple's travels. One is stuffed with the silvery jacket Adams used to wear to Studio 54. Others contain jumbled collages of Mardi Gras beads and American Spirits Cigarettes.

"I've literally lived all over the world and been to a lot of cocktail lounges," Adams said, regarding the scrapbook aesthetic.

But among the coolest touches are the lights. Patrons see the restaurant's name beamed onto the Sixth Avenue sidewalk as they approach, and they're entranced by hypnotic beams of light that dance over the bar.

"The lighting plays a really important part, like the skylight that's behind the bar," Miles said. "It's there to soothe."

"People are in a different mode here than they were at Eve's," Adams said. "We always wanted to create a warm, inviting experience."

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Six Olives

**WHERE:** 2708 Sixth Ave.

**HOURS:** 5 p.m. to midnight, Wednesday through Saturday

**ACCOMMODATIONS:** Visa, MasterCard, Discover

**PRICES:** \$4.50 to \$10.50 for most small plates and appetizers (\$2 for signature six olives order); \$6 to \$9.50 for most signature drinks; \$4.50 to \$13 for "size matters" cocktails; prices vary for beer, champagne, gourmet cocktails

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