

Chef spotlight: Jason Hotchkiss of Encontro



Chef Jason Hotchkiss of Encontro North Park (Courtesy photo)

Allison Keltner

Encontro in North Park has only been open a few months, but it started generating some serious buzz right away. Its mission is to be a community hub serving serious craft food and it's delivering, largely thanks to **Chef Jason Hotchkiss**, who helped owner John Sarkisian create the original protein and greens-centered menu. Now, Hotchkiss has joined the Encontro team full-time as Executive Chef.

Hotchkiss has worked in the restaurant industry for over 30 years, with positions taking him to the East Coast, San Francisco and Los Angeles before relocating to San Diego. He was Executive Chef at the acclaimed Bottega Louie

in downtown Los Angeles before Whisknadle Hospitality hired him as Corporate Chef for their Prepkitchen and Whisknadle restaurants. In San Diego, Hotchkiss has also worked as Corporate Chef for the Cohn Restaurant Group and was director of culinary operations for The Patio Group.

Now in North Park, Hotchkiss is looking forward to enhancing Encontro's menu and continuing to play up the craft food concept in one of San Diego's craft beer havens. "The beer plays a big part in what we design," he said. "Therefore, the craft needs to match up." With 21 rotating taps at Encontro serving local brews, Hotchkiss has enjoyed coming up with dishes that complement San Diego's best beers.

Despite the trouble Hotchkiss has when rotating in new menu items ("We have so many great items, when we change offerings it's hard to decide what to take off," he said), Encontro has recently released some new seasonal specialties, including ribeye steak, Mary's fried chicken and BBQ ribs, with more to come—Hotchkiss hinted at a short rib dish that Encontro guests will get to enjoy this winter, along with patatas bravas, which he called "seriously addictive."

Hotchkiss is also planning to expand Encontro's brunch menu, served on Saturdays and Sundays. Look for chilequiles and a Smoked Salmon Benedict, which will be served on a cheddar biscuit with arugula and truffle honey vinaigrette.

Whether you go for Encontro's burger, one of their house-made sausages, the seasonal fresh catch or the chopped salad, whatever comes out of Hotchkiss's kitchen is going to satisfy your appetite.

Encontro North Park, 3001 University Ave., North Park. encontronorthpark.com