

# PACIFIC

MARCH 3, 2017

## MEET YOUR BARTENDER: KEVIN ASHE



Kevin Ashe, head bartender at Ponsaty's Fine Dining Lounge in Rancho Santa Fe. (K.C. Alfred/Union-Tribune)

One of North County's most elegantly adorned restaurants is also one of its newest. Since throwing open Ponsaty's doors in Rancho Santa Fe last summer, French Master Chef Patrick Ponsaty and his team have pleased a plethora of palates in their decadent dining room. But it's not only the decor or the modern take on French cuisine that's creating a commotion. The cocktail concoctions available at the bar are also causing quite a stir.

The brains behind the bar's mouthwatering menu? San Diego native Kevin Ashe. With more than a decade of experience in the local hospitality scene, he worked his way up from server (cutting his teeth at venues including Donovan's and the Chop House), recently perfecting his pour at The Patio on Goldfinch. Now, Ashe manages the bar at Ponsaty's (and its sister restaurant, Bellamy's), where he designs the cocktail list, handpicks all the spirits and beer, and trains the staff in an effort to standardize everything.

**PACIFIC: What's your favorite thing about working at Ponsaty's?**

KEVIN ASHE: I love the experience offered here. Our chef has been around the world and has Michelin stars under his belt. He's really well-known. And I love working with people who have passion, because it's my goal to work with passion in everything I do. We also work with quality ingredients, and I get given those tools, which makes my job a lot easier.

**How would you describe the decor at Ponsaty's?**

It's very modern, but approachable as well. You can come in dressed to the nines like you're going out to a ball or symphony, in a black tie and suit. Or you can come in after a day of playing golf and be in your hat, sit at the bar, have a good drink and listen to some nice local music. We offer something for everyone.



Ponsaty's Fine Dining & Lounge in Rancho Santa Fe. K.C. Alfred/Union-Tribune)

**What are the influences behind your cocktail program?**

It's neat because, with Chef Ponsaty, he's constantly changing the menu with the season. So, with my program, I try to keep up with him as far as finding out what type of herbs he's bringing into the kitchen and tasting the food. And I try to tailor my cocktails to that. I want something approachable, but a little bit different.



Kevin Ashe, head bartender made an Old Fashioned at Ponsaty's Fine Dining & Lounge in Rancho Santa Fe. (K.C. Alfred/Union-Tribune)

**Which cocktails do you recommend first-time guests try?**

I just put together a chocolate and black truffle Old Fashioned. I really like it. It gives you this robust flavor, but stays true to what an Old Fashioned is. Another cocktail we do is called the *Vous Etes Magnifique*, it means 'you are beautiful,' in French. It's basically a vodka gimlet, but we use fresh basil that gives it a beautiful green color.

**What do you love about the menu?**

There are a lot of different influences as far as modern food, but we stick to traditional dishes and let the ingredients speak for themselves. We prepare beautiful quality fish and use the best ingredients, fresh herbs and all that. I'm a firm believer that the only way you can make something truly exceptional is if you have exceptional ingredients.

**What's your favorite menu item?**

The Cote de Boeuf for Two, which is a giant wet-aged ribeye. It's a beautiful cut of meat that's organically fed and humanely raised. It's nice because the servers bring it out to the table before they cook it, so you can see the marbling in the steak and the beautiful bone coming out of it. I'm a red-meat guy, so it doesn't get any better than that.

**What food-drink pairing do you suggest for first-time guests?**

The Chef's Mount Meadow Mushroom Ravioli. It has a port wine reduction with a little bit of veal stock, and we use these beautiful fresh mushrooms. You can't beat it. I like to pair it with a Black Manhattan, which is true to the regular recipe, except I use an amaro (citrus liqueur) called Averna. It gives the drink more complexity of flavor and is a bit more herby. It comes out a beautiful dark color, which is why we call it a Black Manhattan.



Kevin Ashe, head bartender makes an Old Fashioned at Ponsaty's Fine Dining & Lounge in Rancho Santa Fe. (K.C. Alfred/Union-Tribune)

**How do you spend your time outside of Ponsaty's?**

Honestly, I do a lot of reading. That's how I got where I am now. I reference a lot of great bartenders. I'll read books on bartending, food, anything that pertains to flavor profiles. At one time, I thought I was going to be a chef, but I realized I really like working with people, so bartending was my bridge to do so.

**What's most important to you in life?**

I'm really about family, local businesses and promoting what it is that we offer in the areas that we come from. I think that's the best way to truly represent ourselves.

*Ponsaty's Fine Dining + Lounge: 6106 Paseo Delicias, Rancho Santa Fe, 858.771.1871, [ponsatys.com](http://ponsatys.com)*

**ASHE'S TO ASHE'S**

**SIDE DISH WITH BARTENDER KEVIN ASHE**

**PACIFIC: What quote do you try to live by?**

**ASHE: "A little anarchy is good for the soul."**

**Got any heroes?**

Jerry Thomas. The guy basically built the forum for modern bartending.

**What's your spirit animal?**

The falcon.

**Current favorite song?**

*No Diggity* by Chet Faker.

**Favorite movie?**

*The Shining*.

**Favorite book?**

Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*.



Kevin Ashe, head bartender makes a Sweet Surrender, a Valentine's Day specialty drink at Ponsaty's Fine Dining & Lounge in Rancho Santa Fe. K.C. Alfred/ Union-Tribune)