

## First Sip: Eric Johnson of Smoking Gun

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The Gaslamp's new destination for craft cocktails is adding its own flair to the scene. [Eric Johnson](#), managing partner at [Smoking Gun](#) and [Spill the Beans](#), is creating a wide range of specialty cocktails such as The Smoking Gun cocktail. This libation is smokey, citrusy and refreshing. We caught up with Johnson to chat about his journey in the industry and the concept behind his scotch-based cocktail, The Smoking Gun.

### The Smoking Gun

\$13



1.5 oz Famous Grouse  
.5 oz Laphroaig Select  
.5 oz Averna  
.5 oz Simple Syrup  
.75 oz Lemon Juice  
Garnish: Mint Sprig

### **What's the story behind The Smoking Gun?**

It was a drink my business partner came up with when we were working at Craft & Commerce. I think we were talking about the name first and then that was end product. Our historical building used to be a gun store and range, there are still bullet holes in the basement. It made sense to go back to the building's roots.

### **Scotch can be a difficult spirit to mix, how did you come up with the combination of ingredients?**

There were not a lot of scotch, citrus drinks when we got into the game so that was a category we liked to push. There are lot of scotch drinkers who will not add anything to their scotch and I get it. Every once in a while, it's nice to have a refreshing version, though.

### **When choosing a Scotch, why did you decide to go with Famous Grouse Scotch?**

It's a nice blend of scotch that is not too peaty. It's easier for a non scotch drinker to adapt to the spirit. Although, Laphroaig is the opposite and very peaty but delicious for the experienced scotch drinker.

### **Describe the taste.**

Refreshing nose, with citrus, and a light bitter, smoke. It's like drinking a whiskey smash by the campfire.

### **What's the key component of this drink?**

Scotch

**What reactions are you expecting to get from customers when they try this cocktail for the first time?**

I like to see people who don't drink scotch finally see the light. Someone who was hesitant at first and then decides they like the spirit. Instant gratification.

**If you had to pair this cocktail with a dish, what would you pair it with?**

The Smoking Gun goes well with both of our smoked duroc pork shoulder and beef brisket.

*Watch as Eric Johnson makes his scotch-based cocktail called The Smoking Gun.*



**What kind of experience can guests get at The Smoking Gun?**

Great food, great drinks, with a fun comfortable environment.

## About Eric Johnson



**Are you from San Diego?**

I'm originally from Spokane, WA. I moved here nine years ago.

**How did you get into bartending?**

I started bartending in Spokane when I was 21. We drank a lot up there and seemed like a good job where I could drink and make money at the same time. When I moved to San Diego, I realized that it could be a career and I never looked back.

**What's your favorite thing about bartending?**

Instant gratification of making someone's day better and meeting so many great people.

**Define the 'perfect cocktail.'**

The perfect cocktail is different for everyone. Mine changes on the mood, the weather and the people I'm with. Today, I think the perfect cocktail would be a Japanese Whisky Highball, because it's hot and I want some bubbles.

**If you're going out for a cocktail, what are some spots you like to go in San Diego?**

All of Consortium Holdings have great programs, Sycamore Den, Kettner Exchange, The Grass Skirt and home.

**What do you love about the cocktail scene in San Diego?**

I think we have a really good group of people here that get along quite well. A lot of cities have more drama than we do. We got great people working here.

**Do you have any mentors in the industry?**

My wife Tammy pushes me every day to do better. Even when I'm down, she makes sure I'm back at work.

**What advice would you give an inspiring bartender about being successful in the industry?**

There are many blocks in the road to getting your name out there and you won't get to your destination without hard work. Keep a smile and enjoy every minute of it, good or bad.

**What do you do in your spare time when you're not creating cocktails?**

I play with my daughter or sleep.

**What's next for you?**

Continue to grow The Smoking Gun and Spill the Beans. Open another. Take a vacation!

## Smoking Gun



555 Market St., downtown San Diego. (619) 233-3836  
or [thesmokinggunsd.com](http://thesmokinggunsd.com)

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