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Class Photo by Leah Mennies Dec 10, 08:56AM in Eat

Gardeners, Yogis and Dungeons & Dragons Fanboys Converge at Toro

68 **ff**
VERY GOOD

Toro
South End



The staff at Toro. For a full caption, see below.

Photos by Laura Bulgirin

December is an important month for the gang at [Toro](#). It marks the five year anniversary for the South End tapas destination, run by co-owners and chefs Ken Oringer and Jamie Bissonnette. To celebrate the big anniversary, Toro will host New York tapas master Seamus Mullen on December 13 for a special a la carte menu available until 10 p.m. Items will include duck liver parfait with pickled raisins and "ducky toast," octopus with smoked fingerling potatoes, seafood paella and crispy sweetbreads with cauliflower.

Afn after party—open to the public—will rage all night with dancing, drinks, and, of course, tapas. Get to know who you'll be partying with below, courtesy of our Class Photo: Toro.



Name: Jamie Bissonnette, 3

Hails From: Hartford, CT

Role: Co-chef/owner

Favorite dishes on the menu: "The Bilbao braised goat with bitter chocolate and hazelnuts; the bone marrow is always one of my favorites; and probably the new tripe with braised lamb."

Off-hours activities: "I collect vinyl records, so I am always looking for

more. I am addicted to eBay, and I love eating burgers so it's always fun to find the best burger in town."

Where is it? "Tasty Burger."

How do you balance duties at Toro and Coppa? "Each week I try to figure out which restaurant I spent the least time at the week before, and I spend the most time at that one for the week. I have a scooter, so it's easy to bounce back and forth between restaurants."



Name: Kirsten Amann, 31

Hails From: New Hampshire

Role: Server, bartender, occasional front-of-house manager

Off-hours activities: "Through LUPEC [Ladies United for the Preservation of Endangered Cocktails] I am really involved in the Boston cocktail scene. I also am an avid yogi, so I am doing a teacher training right now."

Signature drink: "For LUPEC we have signature cocktail names... Mine is the Pink Lady, and it's made with gin, applejack, fresh lemon juice, egg white and grenadine."

Favorite drinks on the cocktail menu: "Definitely The Gypsy, it's really, really good. It's got St. Germain, fresh lime, and yellow chartreuse."



Name: John Stoddard, 33

Hails from: Belmont

Role: Server, sustainability coordinator

Recent changes at Toro: "We did stuff like replacing the dish sprayers—we're saving something like 5,000 a year in water, and like 25,000 gallons of water a year just by putting in low flow faucets. We bottle and carbonate our own water. We're still looking at lightbulbs—lightbulbs are a challenge because you have to have the right

lighting, but it makes a big difference."

Off-hours activities: "I have a garden right near my house that I go to. I still have amazing winter greens right now—I just go out and cut them."

Favorite dish on the menu: "The bone marrow because it's so delicious, beautiful presentation... You have the acidic component with the citrus salad, and then you have sort of a sweet component with the oxal marmalade and the very savory bone marrow."

Name: Mike Smith, 27

Hails from: Ocean Park, ME

Role: Sous-chef. "Sometimes we'll get whole animals in, and I will be responsible for breaking them down, using them in whatever we can—head cheese, stews, paella specials..."

Dream restaurant project: "Whenever I end up, I think it's going to be honest food, using the best ingredients and showcasing what nature and farmers can do for us."

Off-duty activities: "I like to read a lot of cookbooks; I like to ride my motorcycle; and I like to drink beer and hang out with friends."

Favorite beers: "Top five would be Yuengling, Coniston Bluebird Bitter, a red ale called Gavroche from France, Blanche de Bruxelles, a wheat beer, and probably Newcastle."



Name: Andy McNeas, 34

Hails from: Oakridge, TN

Role: Bartender

Signature drink: "If you asked people at the bar, 'Oh, what's Andy good at making?' they'd probably say pouring shots. There's a drink I really like called the Champs-Elysées, which is cognac, yellow chartreuse, lemon juice and bitters."

Favorite drink on the cocktail menu: "I like the Nantucket Mule. I like the La Montana—that's a nice seasonal offering because it's spicy and apple-y. Mostly I'm just a beer and bourbon guy."

Off-hours activities: "I like to read, I like crosswords and sports. Some friends and I play Dungeons & Dragons—that's one of my hobbies."

Tell us more: "We are on a two month hiatus right now because of peoples' work schedules—it's actually a lot of restaurant industry people. I won't name any names, because they might get embarrassed. We get together and order pizza and drink and play D. & D. It's not as dorky as I am making it out to be."

Full caption, with nicknames provided by Bissonnette:

Bottom, from left: Jamie, Courtney, Anna, Kelly, Javier, Greta, Katie, Kitty, Luis la Tigre, Jennifer, Carnage, JJ

Top, from left: Andy, Ian, Johnny, MC Canadian Mike, Geoffrey, Franny, Bang Bang Nevin, Johnathan Bonsai, Mark, Martin, Carlos la Mota

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