



# In the Mix: Steven Tuttle, Kettner Exchange

By [Laurie Delk](#) 6 A.M. JUNE 8, 2016



Steven Tuttle, SDCM Beverage Director, mixes up cocktails at Kettner Exchange. *Nancee E. Lewis*

Kettner Exchange could be easily described as an oasis on bustling Kettner Boulevard. Amid the roar of passing cars, planes, and downtown life, the stylish and multi-layered restaurant is a beautiful respite from the urban jungle outside.

Perched on a rooftop barstool, I spent cocktail time with Steven Tuttle, the charming and engaging mastermind behind a deliciously curated drink list.

Tuttle, a San Diego local, graduated from UCSD in business administration and went straight into wine business as a salesman.

“It was a great experience ... but I found out I wasn’t a suit and tie guy,” he said. “Working in the chain division, it felt impersonal.”

He shifted gears and went to work with the well-known Consortium Holdings, starting as a bar back and working his way up through a 5-year tenure. He was on the opening team for Craft & Commerce alongside other In the Mix profiles [Eric Johnson](#) (our 2015 Mixologist of the Year) and [Christian Siglin](#) (Bracero), and working at El Dorado. He was on overdrive pulling eight shifts a week and then went full time at El Dorado as general manager.

In 2014, Tuttle was hired to run a cocktail program at Kettner Exchange and is now embarking on a role as beverage director for the SDCM restaurant group, which includes Kettner, Firehouse, Devil’s Donuts, Vin de Syrah, and Analog (the latter two are partnered with Cohn Restaurant Group).



Cocktails from Kettner Exchange, including (from left) "Spicy Gallagher," "I Go to Rio" and "Afternoon Delight." *Nancee E. Lewis*

Tuttle whipped up three cocktails, two from the freshly released spring list, and one from the New Brunch cocktails that premiered June 4. For the brunch options, Tuttle gathered all of the bartenders, and each developed drinks over a two-week period. In true democratic style, they met, voted on their top five, and those selected ended up on the new menu

I tasted the bright and refreshing Afternoon Delight from bartender Paulina Konja. A twist on a Pisco Collins, it also includes fino sherry, Cocchi Americano, fresh lemon juice, simple syrup and soda, with a grapefruit zest garnish.

I Go to Rio (named after a Pablo Cruise song) hit the mark too, with mezcal, Amburana Cachaça, house-made Curaçao, lime, house-made orgeat, and a Trinidad rum float. “We love mezcal and rum here and we loooooove tropical drinks. We are on a rooftop, we should be drinking these,” Tuttle said.

The Spicy Gallagher is perfect for those tried and true heat lovers. Yes, I’m talking to you Colby Chandler and those who love Ballast Point’s spicy beers. With Serrano-infused tequila, Aperol, lemon, fresh watermelon syrup and soda, it’s a can’t miss.

**Q: What’s your process for making cocktail lists?**

A: I don’t like to overcomplicate drinks. We have an experienced cocktail clientele, and we want to be doing new stuff, but not going overboard. We want them to be comfortable, so we use familiar ingredients too.

**Q: Favorite spirit?**

A: Rum ... but it changes a lot.

**Q: First invented cocktail?**

A: Ah that’s a hard one to remember! One of my first was the Artichoke Hold. (Link to Artichoke cocktail article).

**Q: Favorite drink?**

A: I drink beer. Of course, here in San Diego, IPAs. I really like the fruit kick going through beers right now. I like Mango Even Keel, all the variations of Sculpin, and Avery Liliko’i Kepolo.

**Q: Where do you go for a drink?**

A: I wish I went out more! I’ve been visiting Eric at Juniper and Christian at Bracero. Also Ballast Point and Modern Times.

Stay tuned for SDCM’s next project with Tuttle, a tiki bar that’s still to be announced. In the meantime, make your cocktail date with the crew at Kettner Exchange at 2001 Kettner Blvd. in Little Italy. For more information, visit [kettnerexchange.com](http://kettnerexchange.com).

*With 18 years in the restaurant and beverage industry and more than 850 reviews under her belt, Laurie Delk is a one-stop guide to all things craft beer, wine and spirits. You can follow Delk on Twitter @100beers30days or Instagram @sandiegobeer. Send ideas for featured drinks to [lauriedelk101@gmail.com](mailto:tolauriedelk101@gmail.com)*



Steven Tuttle, SDCM Beverage Director, on the stairwell leading the the second floor bar and seating area at Kettner Exchange. Nancee E. Lewis