

# PREP



## OVER THE TABLE

The 86 Co. provided the spirits for the event.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE 86 CO.

# A Sweet Release

SAN FRANCISCO'S STAG DINING GROUP AND THE 86 CO. PARTNER WITH BROOKLYN'S OVENLY BAKERY FOR A NIGHT OF SWEET AND SAVORY PAIRINGS

BY JONATHAN CRISTALDI / PHOTOS BY JOUKO VAN DER KRUIJSSEN



The perpetrators (left to right): Stag Dining Group's Matthew Homyak, Jorden Grosser and Justin Schneider; authors Agatha Kulaga and Erin Patinkin; SDG's Lillie Auld and Marc Hartenfels; (kneeling): SDG's Parker Vaughan.

Nora Furst, voted 2015 “Best Bartender in San Francisco” by 7x7 magazine, was finishing up the prep on her first round of cocktails as guests began to trickle into the hidden boiler room at Heath Ceramics in San Francisco’s Mission district. A myriad of smells filled the air—Chef Jordan Grosser, Executive Chef of the **Stag Dining Group** (SDG), a San Francisco supper club known for its Clandestine Dinner Series, was busy with his team plating a Dungeness crab bao bun, the first of several passed plates. Erin Patinkin and Agatha Kulaga, proprietors of **Ovenly**, the Brooklyn-based bakery, and authors of the newly minted *Ovenly: Sweet and Salty Recipes from New York’s Most Creative Bakery* (Harlequin, \$29.95), were preparing a stack of books for autograph signing.

Matthew Homyak, one of the five co-founding Stags, is a long-time friend of Patinkin, who reached out to Homyak



**Nora Furst making the Amartinez cocktail with The 86 Co.'s Ford's Gin.**

#### **AMARTINEZ**

- 1½ oz. Ford's Gin
- ¾ oz. Punt e Mes
- ¼ oz. Amaro Ciociaro
- 1/8 oz. Luxardo Maraschino
- 1 dash orange bitters
- Stir, strain into chilled cocktail glass, express oils and garnish with lemon peel.

when she knew they were coming west. The Stags were into the idea of arranging a classy book-signing affair, one that would provide a memorable last stop on Ovenly's West Coast tour. The first call they made was to **The 86 Co.**, makers of Ford's Gin, Aylesbury Duck Vodka, Caña Brava Rum and Tequila Cabeza, devising a collaboration that brought about a decadent night of sweet and savory cocktails and food pairings, inspired by ingredients in the Ovenly cookbook.

Ovenly, which operates a gangbuster wholesale business and retail shop in Brooklyn, was named "Best Bakery in NYC" in 2013 by *Time Out New York*, and has received praise from *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *Eater* among many other publications.

"The cocktails are super-inventive," raved Kulaga, "just like the desserts we make."

"Everything we do is sweet and salty with a touch of spice," said Patinkin, "and Ovenly actually started as a bar snacks company, so we always imagined a lot of what we make pairing with cocktails and wine."

Snackers-turned-enchanted-bakers, the Ovenly cookbook, which was released in October, offers the sweets of Kulaga and Patinkin's labor—pages of mouthwatering recipes enhanced by photographer Winona Barton-

Ballentine's distinct eye for capturing that veritable sweet spot.

Looking to incorporate elements of Ovenly's recipes for the food and drink pairings at the event, the Stags leafed through the book scouring for ingredients to riff on. "We often do a beer and cheese espuma," explained Parker Vaughan, SDG's Chef de Cuisine, "and Ovenly had a recipe for cheddar and mustard scones [page 28 in the cookbook], so we switched out the pretzel stick traditionally in our dish with their cheddar mustard scone and made scone sticks to dip into the beer and cheese espuma."

It was delicious, and even better, paired with a Gin and Tonic (Ford's Gin, cardamom tonic, lime) and an autographed copy of the book—which I received while slurping my espuma.

Chef Grosser explained that for the cocktail creation, "We handed off the food menu to our Derby Cocktail Collective and they took our recipes to Nora and 86 Co., and collaborated to create cocktails inspired by our dishes."

Nora Furst, who was representing The 86 Co. for the event, runs the bar program at San Francisco's Lolinda and El Techo de Lolinda. "My thought process for putting together this menu has been a combination of showcasing the clean and classic styles of 86 Co. products," explained Furst, "along with

translating Erin and Agatha's culinary style into cocktails."

Furst sensed in the ingredients "a nod to nostalgia with a breath of some innovative and exciting flavor combinations." She noted too that "ancho, cinnamon and chocolate" was a combination that shows up in the cookbook, as well as "green cardamom, which is listed as one of their essential ingredients."

Furst was confident that the cocktails would pair up nicely with the food, and she was right—the nice clean flavors of her quaffs brought about a harmonious experience on the palate. A favorite was her Amartinez cocktail paired with the beer/cheese espuma and dipping scones.

As for Kulaga and Patinkin, the



**Beer and cheese espuma, by Stag Dining Group.**



**The dessert course, prepped by Patinkin and Kulaga, was a cake made with Belgian sour beer Rodenbach.**

book tour has really broadened their horizons beyond the local New York contingent. They've been hearing from people around the country who have discovered their recipes, which are "exactly the same as the ones we use in the bakery," said Patinkin. "But also a slew of things we love from home-baking—and there's a holiday chapter of recipes we grew up eating."

Altogether, the evening proved to be an intoxicatingly sweet affair. 🍷