



A Heavenly Host

Is it Eastern Standard's food and drink or Andrew Holden's good looks and charming manners that keep the crowd coming back? BY RACHEL BOWIE

MOST NIGHTS, Andrew Holden can be found at Eastern Standard Kitchen & Drinks, the Kenmore Square hot spot where he's general manager. Holden insists that great dining is more about the experience than the meal, but regulars say it's Holden himself who has a lot to do with creating repeat customers. The 29-year-old Watertown native, who plays host to a diverse crowd most nights, was tapped to be Eastern Standard's GM a year ago, after a series of gigs—at gourmet bakery Iggy's, at Ambrosia on Huntington, and as manager at Clio and Uni for four years. Holden sat down with *Boston Common* to talk about what it takes to be an accommodating host, share his opinions on a few other worthy nightspots in town, and to tell how he

makes guests at his home feel welcome.

BOSTON COMMON: Who taught you to have good manners?

ANDREW HOLDEN: My mother, of course. It took me a while to appreciate what she was trying to teach me, but it finally sank in.

BC: If first impressions count, how do you make yours one to remember?

AH: The trick is to keep a good first impression going. I am one person on a team devoted to bringing passion, sincerity, and enthusiasm to our guests from the beginning to the end of their experience.

BC: What other places in Boston consistently get it right?

AH: Taberna de Haro, Silverstone, Shabu Zen, and Central Kitchen. I like to go to an interesting restaurant in a unique Boston neighborhood that has its own distinct feel.

BC: What do you do on those rare nights off?

AH: Dinner, of course.

BC: What's your drink of choice?

AH: The Sazerac—it's a complex blend of rye, biters, and pastis that I first had while living in New Orleans and going to school at Tulane. It's a staple on the Eastern Standard cocktail menu.

BC: And what drink never fails?

AH: Champagne! The bubbly is not just a great aperitif, but it's extremely food-friendly. It works throughout the meal—even with steak and dessert.

BC: When dining out, which restaurant staffer can you always trust?

AH: The general manager, of course! Seriously, it is in the best interest of the staff to provide you with a great experience. Put yourself in their hands and see where it leads you.

BC: Describe your favorite guest.

AH: Someone who thinks of dining out as fun and more than just about food. Someone who feels comfortable taking a suggestion from the staff and trying something new.

BC: When you have friends over for dinner, how do you make them feel at home?

AH: I serve their favorite foods and beverages... and let them wash the dishes! That always makes them feel right at home.

BC: What are three things you should always have on hand when entertaining?

AH: Great music, great wine, and great cheese.

BC: On a night out, always indulge in...

AH: A good experience with good company. ♦