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Three Locals Walk into a Hotel Bar...

Spots so good we'd go even if we weren't staying the night

Unless conference-goers wearing lanyards are your thing, the vibe at hotel bars is sometimes...lacking. Not anymore. Hotel bars are now good enough that even locals can't stay away. You'll find them nursing a well-crafted cocktail at Philly's **Wm. Mulherin's Sons** (above). In Burlington, Vermont, they're sipping funky natural wines at **Juniper** inside **Hotel Vermont**. And they can't help but go all out at the swank **Cooper Lounge** at Denver's **Crawford Hotel**. These bars are built for the community, not just transient drinkers—all the more fun for those without room keys.

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WHAT'S IN IT FOR THE CHEF?

Chef JJ Johnson and developer David Mitchell tell us about their mutually beneficial move with Henry at Life Hotel in New York City.

The Chef



"I said yes so that I could open the door to chefs who look like me. There are only three high-profile black chefs in the country with restaurants in hotels: Marcus Samuelsson, Nina Compton, and Kwame Onwuachi. If this is successful, then maybe more hotels will hire diverse chefs. But I also said yes because working with a hotel frees me up. If I had my own brick-and-mortar and, say, a pipe burst, I'd be my own plumber. I wouldn't have HR support or in-house mechanics, which I do here. I don't have to worry about those things. That allows me to focus not only on the food but also on the restaurant's culture." —JJ JOHNSON

The Hotel Developer



"For a long time, hotels just thought of restaurants as part of the amenities, like a gym or free WiFi. But when we took over the old Life building, we didn't want to open just another hotel restaurant. We wanted people to feel a big bear hug when they walked into the space, and you can't get that with a corporate chef. JJ brings soulfulness—there is no one cooking food like him in the neighborhood. Plus, he has a reputation after his time at the Cecil. His career is skyrocketing, so now Henry is an attraction." —DAVID MITCHELL



Shaya's duck matzo ball soup, lamb ragù hummus, and crispy fries. ● **ONDA, PROPER HOTEL** Our office Slack went crazy when we learned Contramar's Gabriela Cámara and Sqirl's Jessica Koslow were teaming up for a restaurant in Santa Monica this summer. ● **HENRIETTA'S, LIVING ROOM, AND CITRUS CLUB, THE DEWBERRY** This Charleston

