

# Knock Knock

Speakeasies savor a sweet resurgence in the desert.

STORY BY JESSICA RITZ

Once operated out of necessity during Prohibition, when the Volstead Act was in effect from 1920 to 1933, speakeasies are back — albeit with a contemporary twist. Even if gaining access no longer requires a network of social connections and a password, a semi-discreet spot still carries a certain allure. All the better when sophisticated vibes and expertly made drinks are involved. Here's the inside line on tucked-away spots where some dramatic intrigue and mystery make for an adventurous night out.



## Seymour's Palm Springs

A dark hallway off the buzzy lounge at Mr. Lyons Steakhouse and an unmarked back entrance lead to Seymour's, a speakeasy operated by F10 Creative. (The hospitality group, founded by Tara Lazar, also launched Cheeky's, Birba, and the Alcazar hotel, among other beloved gathering spots.) "It has the bones of a great little bar with two entrances, both kind of hidden," says Seymour's co-owner Steen Bojsen-Møller. Named in honor of Lazar's father, a prominent Los Angeles entertainment industry attorney, Seymour's opened in May 2016. As with the rest of the restaurant, contemporary design elements fuse with chic nods to the past — in this case, vintage caricature prints from *Vanity Fair* drawn by Sir Leslie Ward that adorn the walls. "All these items come together and give the room a wonderful feeling of nostalgia," Bojsen-Møller says. "People like stumbling across a hidden gem." What to drink? Try the Little Owl, made with rye whiskey, IPA syrup, walnut liqueur, and Angostura Amaro. [seymoursp.com](http://seymoursp.com)

MOLLIE KIMBERLING (2)

## Poca Sombra Cathedral City

"Poca Sombra is intended to feel like a personal discovery, [designed] for people who enjoy the feeling of attaining an experience that's not available to everyone," restaurateur Chad Gardner says. The newly opened venue is located at The Paloma Resort's Sol y Sombra restaurant in Cathedral City and was developed by Gardner with partners Tim and Amy Brinkman of LIT, a Bay Area-based hospitality group. The bar is open to the public — but it requires a little know-how to locate the unmarked poolside entrance. The tequila-focused bar offers a long list of agave-based spirits, ranging from known labels to small producers. An evolving cocktail menu



includes the Naked & Famous, composed of mezcal, Chartreuse, and Aperol, and the Siesta, with tequila reposado, Chambord, and ginger beer. "Even though speakeasies are no longer an illicit adventure," Gardner says, "walking into one still feels like being invited behind the curtain." [thepalomaresort.com](http://thepalomaresort.com)



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## Did You Know?



Given that organized crime leaders took a shine to the Coachella Valley back in the day, it's no surprise that various illicit enterprises took root. Al Wertheimer, who was allegedly associated with the Purple Gang from Detroit, opened the Dunes Club casino in 1934 in Cathedral City, followed by the Colonial House two years later. According to local lore, the lavish Indian Canyon Drive property that remains popular today (now The Colony Palms Hotel and Bungalows) harbored an underground space for activities best indulged in away from public view.



## PS Air Palm Springs

PS Air is proof positive that when it comes to establishing a theme, it's best to go all in. In the summer of 2021, Dennis Costa and his team opened this aviation-inspired bar and lounge inside Bouschet, a fine wine and spirits shop. Cleverly outfitted to replicate a retro commercial airplane cabin, PS Air regularly hosts live performances and accommodates approximately 50 guests; yet it still feels intimate

and instantly convivial thanks to the unconventional seat configuration and unique experience. Groups of fewer than four will likely be seated facing one another, Costa explains, "so you're going to be interacting with people that are not in your party." Popular specialty cocktails include the Turbulence, a spicy margarita made with pineapple and muddled cucumber, and the Red Eye, with grapefruit vodka, grapefruit juice, and hibiscus syrup. [psairbar.com](http://psairbar.com)