

OPENING ALERT EXPANSIONS EATER INSIDE

# The Hourly Rides Into Harvard Square With So Many Oysters

Take a peek inside the Grafton Group's newest restaurant, opening today at 5 p.m.

By [Rachel Leah Blumenthal](#) @blumie Sep 22, 2016, 10:25a



**The Hourly in Harvard Square, Cambridge.** Photos by [Rachel Leah Blumenthal](#) for Eater.

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15 Dunster St. has been home to many businesses, especially in the last few years. Originally the Cambridge Savings Bank (and maintaining an old bank vault door over the decades), it was a Herrell's Ice Cream franchise for 27 years before owner Jeffrey Stanett **converted it into a restaurant** instead — **First Printer**. After a couple years, First Printer was replaced by **Kennedy's on the Square**, which only lasted six months.

Now a team with deep roots in Harvard Square is giving it new life as an oyster bar. Enter the Grafton Group, owners of Russell House Tavern, Park, and Grafton Street in the square, Temple Bar just a little bit down the street, and State Street Provisions across the river in downtown Boston. The group is opening The Hourly today, named for the hourly horse-drawn carriages that used to pick up passengers at the end of Dunster Street — then Water Street, since the banks of the Charles River came right up to the street at the time — and brought them into Boston.

The space has the same landlord as Russell House, so it's been on the group's radar for some time; in fact, they passed on it a couple times, says co-owner Patrick Lee. But ultimately they were won over by features such as the space for a large prep kitchen downstairs. This could eventually benefit Russell House as well; conveniently enough, the back doors of The Hourly and Russell House Tavern are connected by an alley, possibly allowing for some future symbiosis between the siblings. (In **early coverage** of The Hourly, there was talk of a "robust" takeout program; Lee explains that that stemmed from the presence of that giant prep kitchen. It's probably still in the cards but won't happen right away.)

The idea for The Hourly came in part due to the success of Russell House's raw bar offerings. "It was time to have a fun little oyster bar in Harvard Square," Lee says. "It

## *A fun little oyster bar*

seems like there are more and more popping up in neighborhoods, similar to breweries. I feel like people are becoming more attached to the local brewery. Having fun stuff in each neighborhood is good."

The existence of The Hourly won't impact the existing raw bar at Russell House, and in fact, The Hourly will close at 11 p.m., which is when Russell House starts its nightly dollar oyster special.

Executive chef Taryn Bonnefoi — who interned at Biba back in the day before working for the Four Seasons in Boston and San Francisco for eight years and then working her way through the culinary scene in France — has been with the Grafton Group for about a year, working at Russell House and State Street Provisions. "In all my years of cooking, [the menu] is a collaboration of things that I love to eat, flavors that I prefer, and a lot of the techniques that I've learned over the years," she says. She's particularly excited about the lobster spaghetti.

The Hourly's raw bar, she explains, will have a selection of eight oysters, generally one from the west coast, one from up north (such as P.E.I.), and the rest sourced locally. There will also be lobster tails, crab claws, marinated mussels on the half-shell, and more.

## *Seafood-friendly drinks*

As for the beverage program, expect lots of seafood-friendly beers and wines, along with a compact cocktail list (currently six options), according to bar manager Ashish Mitra (who will also remain at the helm of Russell House's bar program). "I don't want to say that [the beverages] are taking a backseat," he says, "but we really want to work hand-in-hand with the kitchen. We're wine-heavy, and then we've got beer of course, and the cocktail list is very small. They're all designed to go with seafood, raw seafood in particular. That's really what we want to give our guests, that paired experience."

As such, expect a lot of white and sparkling wines. There are also four wines on tap — currently a New Zealand sauvignon blanc, a California chardonnay, a Long Island white table wine, and a California pinot noir. While Russell House's wine list is fully domestic, Mitra has pulled together a more global list for The Hourly. There's a bit of a French focus but also selections from South Africa, Spain, and beyond.

One cocktail that proved popular during the soft opening, says Mitra, is La Sirena ("the mermaid"). It's made with Privateer silver rum from Ipswich, grapefruit juice, a beach plum liqueur (the plums grow wild around the New England coast, so it's a nice tie-in to the seafood and nautical vibe), a little salt "to bring out all the flavors," and sugar. "It's extremely light and very, very refreshing," he says. The Hourly Sidecar was also a hit with the earliest crowds — applejack, apple brandy, and yellow chartreuse.

Unlike its dark, moody siblings, The Hourly is bright, full of light blues and white tiles and nautical pictures. The banquettes are deep blue leather, with some stools to match, while other stools and seats are tan instead. There's ample natural light, intensified by the mirrors that line the dining room.

The space is mostly filled with high-tops, including a couple long communal tables near the eight-seat raw bar, and there's a substantial horseshoe-shaped bar in the center, which seats 15. Most of the restaurant is available to walk-ins; reservations are only taken for the few standard-height tables in the dining room. The full menu is available at the bar.

## *Plenty of space for walk-ins*

While the signature bank vault has been used by previous tenants for private dining, at The Hourly it's used for wine and liquor storage and for a service area, a move that cuts down a little on seating but will help service, according to Lee. Aside from the vault, there's another remnant of the building's past lives — a distinctive tiled floor with a fleur-de-lis pattern that matches a section of ornately carved stone on the building's exterior.

Next door is Mike's Pastry, and next door to that is a wide alley that'll eventually become The Hourly's patio, much like the cozy patio at big sibling Russell House Tavern. If weather permits, The Hourly might get the chance to open the patio in time for a few weeks of 2016; otherwise, stay tuned for its debut next year. Meanwhile, the restaurant expects to debut lunch service quickly and brunch (both Saturday and Sunday) in a month or so.

## *A place to relax*

Reflecting on the origin of the restaurant's name, Lee explains that while the mode of transportation has evolved over the years — the hourly carriages, buses, streetcars, subway — the route has stayed the same, for the most part. "The more things change, the more things stay the same," he says. "Restaurants evolve as well, but ultimately at the end of the day, they're a place to relax and get away from daily life for an hour."

- [The Hourly Coverage on Eater](#) [EBOS]

