

EATER

American Comfort Food Gets an International Spin at Eggslut Chef's First NYC Restaurant

The Usual from Alvin Cailan opens on Friday, July 13

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After an extended preview period, chef **Alvin Cailan** behind LA hit Eggslut is set to officially open his casual Nolita restaurant **the Usual** tomorrow — serving a comfort food menu that pulls inspiration from a wide swathe of cuisines, from fried chicken of the American South to an octopus tinged with aspects of Mexican cuisine.

Cailan's goal with his first NYC restaurant, in the Nolitan Hotel at 30 Kenmare St. between Elizabeth and Mott streets, is to make a place locals can come back to often, hence the name. The menu is accordingly casual, taking comfort food and putting what he calls immigrant spins on them.

“It’s comfort food, but I’m Filipino, so there are some some Filipino influences,” Cailan says, “but I grew up in LA, so also some Mexican-Latino influences. And my sous chef is Chinese-Vietnamese from Houston. So the way we think of food and our flavors are completely different.”

Octopus gets a Mexican bent with pozole verde, cabbage, radishes, and hominy, while tuna tartare channels Japan by being served on a nori cracker with tonnato aioli and wasabi sprouts. Other dishes are straight-up comfort food, like the fried chicken served Louisiana style with cajun herbs and spices, cheddar and chive biscuits, and ranch. Of course, there’s a burger on the menu, too, which is fairly straightforward: two thin Pat La Frieda patties made from short rib, brisket, and chuck and topped with grated tomatoes, roasted garlic aioli, and onions.



Cailan’s partners here are general manager **Kim Trac**, who hails from the popular Chi Spacca and Pizzeria Mozza in Los Angeles, as well as the owners of the Nolitan. His sommelier brother **Anthony Cailan** is in charge of wine, bringing experience from Bestia and Animal, also in LA. The wine list has over 150 small-producer, largely biodynamic labels mainly from California and Europe.

This LA crew influenced the design of the mid-sized restaurant, which is super bright and filled with concrete, light wood, burgundy banquettes, and gold touches. The bar top is pink granite, as are some of the walls. “I think if you came here, you’d know the operators are from California,” Cailan says.



Cailan is most well-known for his breakfast sandwich restaurant [Eggslut](#), the restaurant that raised his profile in the community and [still draws long lines](#). He then brought the concept to NYC as a pop-up, which was so popular that [it extended its stay](#) in [Chefs Club Counter](#). His Bob’s Burgers pop-up in the same space [similarly drew very long lines](#). But with the Usual, Cailan is trying to distance himself a little from his acclaimed breakfast sandwich hit.

“In LA, I’m the Eggslut guy, but really I’ve been a cook since I was 15 years old,” he says. “I’m 35 now, so we really wanted to have the experience of opening a regular restaurant in the major leagues of food and have fun at the same time.”

The Usual debuts on Friday, July 13 and will be open daily from 6:30 p.m. to midnight.

<https://ny.eater.com/2018/7/12/17561578/usual-photos-menu-open-nyc>