# Houston Cocktail Bar Under The Volcano Celebrates 35 Years

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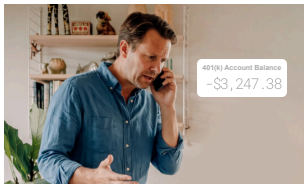


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*Pete and Vera Mitchell, owners of Under The Volcano, with daughter Lua. Courtesy photo.*

POSTED: SEPTEMBER 16, 2024 2:16 PM / BY **PHAEDRA COOK (HTTPS://HOUSTONFOODFINDER.COM/AUTHOR/PHAEDRAREVOLUTIONCOLLAB-COM/)** / COMMENTS (0)

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Longstanding Houston bar **Under The Volcano** (https://www.underthevolcanohouston.com/) at 2349 Bissonnet is flowing into its 35th year of business and celebrating with an **anniversary party** (https://www.underthevolcanohouston.com/event/35th-anniversary-celebration/). The weekend of fun starts on **Saturday, September 21 from 6 p.m. to midnight** and then picks up again on **Sunday, September 22 from 10 a.m. until midnight.** The festivities will include a rollback to 1989 prices on certain drinks.

Ahead of the party weekend, Under The Volcano is hosting a **photo competition** on social media. Post photos of your visits — old or new — on Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/volcanohouston) and tag @volcanohouston (https://www.instagram.com/volcanohouston) with #volcanohoustonturns35 to be entered into a drawing for giveaways on Saturday, September 21.

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# UNDER THE VOLCANO'S 35TH ANNIVERSARY PARTY DETAILS

*Under The Volcano has brought cocktails to Houston for 35 years. Courtesy photo.*

During the weekend celebration, customers will get to indulge in **frozen screwdrivers** and **Jello shots at 1989 prices — $3.75 and $2, respectively** — and if you're immune to brain-freeze, you can join the **Frozen Screwdriver Drinking Competition** that starts at 8 p.m. on Saturday, September 21. The goal is to see how quickly you can finish the drink, and the winner gets a prize.

Saturday also features a **complimentary buffet** and **raffles from 6 to 10 p.m**., as well as DJs until midnight. On Sunday, September 22, the day starts with the **Artisan Bazaar** from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The band **Demroots** will perform from 1 to 4 p.m. and there will be a live broadcast of KPFT 90.1 FM's Blues In Hi-Fi (https://kpft.org/2024/04/30/live-remote-video-at-mercantile-april-24-2024/) show with Clint Broussard from 5 to 7 p.m. There's a charitable aspect to the festivities as well: all raffle and donation proceeds will go to **Friends of El Salvador** (https://www.friendsofelsalvador.org/ourstory), a non-profit that helps underserved adults and youth in El Salvador through

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# UNDER THE VOLCANO'S HISTORY




*Under The Volcano's decor, such as this sculpture by Rey Calaca, is inspired by Dia De Los Muertos, the timeframe its namesake book is set in.*

According to **Bárbara Mistó**, sister of owner **Vera Mistó Mitchell** who runs the bar alongside her husband, **Pete Mitchell**, a man named **Bob Precious** originally opened the bar in 1989, first leasing the dilapidated space and later purchasing it. In the 1940s, it had been an icehouse (https://www.chron.com/entertainment/restaurants-bars/article/Under-the-Volcano-celebrate-30-years-1-M-screwdriv-14449274.php), then became Munchies, a non-profit music venue showcasing members of the Houston Symphony who played live jazz and classical. Precious named his new bar Under The Volcano after a 1959 novel by Malcomb Lowry (https://amzn.to/3MLKXaT). The novel, set during Dia De Los Muertos, inspired the decor — and still does to this day.

Precious, who also owned Houston bar The Ginger Man (https://thegingerman.com/) (which now only exists in Las Colinas (https://thegingerman.com/); the Houston location closed in 2020 (https://www.chron.com/food/article/rice-demolishes-houston-ginger-man-19393308.php)), rehabilitated the space implementing

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Under The Volcano officially opened on September 21, 1989. Even though initially the bar didn't serve hard liquor, some residents of its Southhampton neighborhood, which is adjacent to Rice Village and West University, didn't welcome the bar. According to Mistó, residents protested it for the first five years, finally laying off when a judge told them to stop harassing the business. These days, Under The Volcano is a fixture of the neighborhood.

In 1998, the Mitchells, who were Under The Volcano employees, bought the business. Since then, it's collected a number of accolades over the years, including Best Bar in Rice Village (https://www.houstonpress.com/music/best-of-houston-2022-best-bar-rice-village-13954116), Best Happy Hour in West U/Rice Village (https://houston.eater.com/maps/best-restaurants-near-rice-university-rice-village-houston), Best Steak Night (https://www.houstoniamag.com/eat-and-drink/2017/06/which-day-of-the-week-has-the-best-steak-night-houston) and, very recently, as one of the 18 Best Restaurants in Rice Village (https://houston.eater.com/maps/best-restaurants-near-rice-university-rice-village-houston).



*House Smoked Salmon at Under The Volcano. Courtesy photo.*

Pete Mitchell has said in interviews

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Houston's first craft cocktail bar. In 2019, he told Community Impact (https://communityimpact.com/local-news/houston/bellaire-meyerland-west-university/news/2019/09/16/under-the-volcano-celebrates-30-years-of-business/), "At first we were sort of a college bar, then we decided to really take on craft cocktails and took older recipes, used fresh ingredients and were amazed at how much better the drinks were that way. We were just trying to be a little more serious about drinks that people have done in the past but still have fun with it."

While the claim of being Houston's first craft cocktail bar would require substantial research to validate (Prohibition-era speakeasies and the historical drink lists of Houston's oldest bars (https://www.thrillist.com/drink/houston/the-oldest-bars-in-houston) would have to be thoroughly researched) when considering the *modern* craft cocktail era, which started in the late 1980s (https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/modern-craft-cocktail-movement-got-its-start-during-prohibition-180971265/#:~:text=A%20modern%20movement%20is%20born,served%20in%20dimly%20lit%20lounges.), Mitchell's claim may very well be accurate. Either way, Under The Volcano deserves respect for providing Houstonians with a fun hangout for 35 years.

Go online for more information (https://www.underthevolcanohouston.com/event/35th-anniversary-celebration/) and the full schedule of anniversary events.


Phaedra Cook (https://houstonfoodfinder.com/author/phaedrarevolutioncollab-com/)

Phaedra Cook has written about Houston's restaurant and bar scene since 2010. She was a regular contributor to *My Table* magazine (now closed) and was the lead restaurant critic for the *Houston Press* for two years, eventually being promoted to food editor. Cook founded Houston Food Finder in November 2016 and has been its editor and publisher ever since.

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