

# BUSINESS



Euclid Hall Bar & Kitchen executive chef Jennifer Jasinski, second from left, and general manager Beth Gruitch prepare for next week's opening. The two also own Rioja and Bistro Vendôme. Photos by Karl Gehring, *The Denver Post*

## New restaurant likely won't need much luck

By Drew FitzGerald  
*The Denver Post*

About a week before the scheduled opening of her third and biggest restaurant, executive chef Jennifer Jasinski paused to consider her immediate competition.

All told, she counted a dozen restaurants already established in the same one-block area around Larimer Square in downtown Denver.

"We're No. 13?" said Beth Gruitch, Jasinski's business partner and general manager of the new restaurant, Euclid Hall Bar & Kitchen. "That's awesome."

Of course, Gruitch and Jasinski have spent their careers running restaurants, which means contending with more pressing headaches than numerology and bad luck. And they aren't really competing with all 12 restaurants — they already own two of them: Rioja and Bistro Vendôme, both hard-won, undeniable successes.

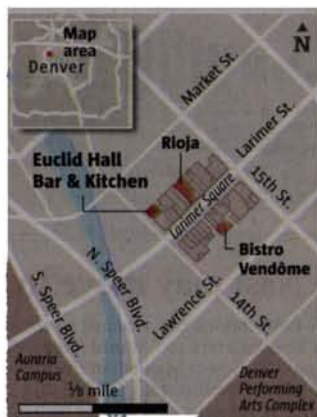
Larimer Square's business model of small, locally managed shops and restaurants has been steadily gaining traction since 2000. Restaurant sales have more than doubled since then, according to Larimer Associates. Gruitch and Jasinski are no small part of that turnaround after they first opened Rioja in 2004.

The pair's newest concept, around the corner on 14th Street, aims even higher. Its three stories will initially employ 90 people, as many as their other two restaurants combined. For clientele, they look to attract a new set of patrons from the Pepsi Center, Lower Downtown and nearby neighborhoods.

When Larimer Associates chief executive Jeff Hermanson was looking for a new tenant to replace the nightclub Martini Ranch, he said he knew Gruitch and Jasinski would be up to the challenge.

"They're real adults," Hermanson said. "They recognize that what they're doing is not only an artistic expression but also a business."

Instead of cooking up a fresh brand for their newest restaurant, which opens Monday, Gruitch and Jasinski de-



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ecided to use the fading words chiseled atop the 6,600-square-foot building more than a century ago: Euclid Hall.

Gruitch said she wants the restaurant to cater to "beer geeks" with 12 drafts and at least 35 bottles and cans at the bar. At the same time, cooks in an open kitchen will prepare a mix of German pub food, filleted fish dishes and gut-pleasers such as poutine, also known as gravy fries.

Hermanson said he initially wanted to try either a contemporary barbecue restaurant or another theme. In the end, though, he deferred to the duo's pitch for "crafted" comfort food.

"They totally sold us," he said. The restaurant's eclectic inspirations extend to its namesake, with a Greek delta in its logo and beer-menu headings ranging from light lager "arithmetic" to the "quantum mathematics" in a smoky porter.

Mathematical precision makes an apt theme for a restaurant run by the pair. About a week ahead of the restaurant's opening, as chef de cuisine Jorel Pierce taught a cook how to divide a pig in the basement kitchen and construction workers fastened hot-rolled steel decals on the floor above, Jasinski glided among work stations with a 50-item to-do list.

"Sometimes I feel like the more you know, the more you find out that you don't know still," said Jasinski, who cut her teeth in Los Angeles under chef Wolfgang Puck. "I won't make the same mistakes. I'll make new mistakes."

Drew FitzGerald: 303-954-1381 or [dfitzgerald@denverpost.com](mailto:dfitzgerald@denverpost.com)



Ryan Conklin, a bartender at Euclid Hall Bar & Kitchen, cleans glasses last week while general manager Beth Gruitch speaks on the phone.