



The speakeasy-style Nortico bar.

## CRAFT COCKTAILS AND CREATIVE CUISINE AT A TIJUANA SPEAKEASY



Javier Esparza of Cocinas Institucionales, S.A. (left) and Chef Ruffo Ibarra of Oryx Capital/Nortico.

**T**he term “speakeasy” conjures up images of gangsters and bootleg gin in 1920s Chicago, but a 21st-century speakeasy is lighting up the entertainment scene in Tijuana, Mexico, with some help from Beverage-Air, Champion and Amana/MenuMaster.

Upscale food and drink is the hallmark of the 90-seat Oryx Capital restaurant in Tijuana, where Chef Ruffo Ibarra conjures up such

culinary delights as octopus torta, octopus marinated in dried chili oil with avocado cream, roasted corn and a chili aioli. His organic tomato ceviche combines five different types of tomatoes, mezcal, serrano chili, and a tomato water and citrus foam. Ibarra describes his cuisine as “Cali-Baja comfort food, driven by produce from local beaches, ranches and farms.”

But the thing that makes Oryx Capital truly unusual is found at the end of a dark hall near the back of the restaurant. There, behind a secret door, is Nortico — a modern take on the classic speakeasy. This hideaway seats just 34,

To keep their ingredients at perfect temperature, Nortico and Oryx Capital rely on products from Ali Group companies.

and reservations can only be made by text message — no calls accepted. Decorated with black-and-white photos of gangsters and bootleggers, this stylish and cozy bar specializes in craft cocktails. Nortico serves a mixture of cocktails from the past, like the Ramos gin fizz, and inspired new creations using artisanal ingredients and spirits. “I was inspired by the cocktail culture in many cities I visited in the U.S., like San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York,” says Ibarra. “And since Tijuana owes most of its economic movement to Prohibition times, I thought it would make sense to do an homage to Prohibition times in Tijuana.”

To keep their ingredients at perfect temperature, Nortico and Oryx Capital rely on products from Ali Group companies. The Oryx Capital bar uses a Beverage-Air direct draw beer refrigerator to dispense perfectly chilled beer and back bar glass door refrigerators for convenient storage of chilled product. That’s especially useful for a restaurant that has as large of a beer and wine selection as Oryx Capital does. Also behind the bar is an efficient, versatile and quiet Champion undercounter dishwasher, which can clean lots of glasses on those hot Tijuana days when the bar is moving lots of beer and cocktails. The restaurant kitchen also has a Beverage-Air



Oryx Capital and Nortico use a variety of Beverage-Air products in the kitchen and the bar area.

refrigerated cook stand, a prep table and several reach-in refrigerators and freezers, as well as microwaves from Amana/MenuMaster.

With their compact footprints, undercounter and back bar refrigerators from Beverage-Air help maximize every inch of space behind the Nortico speakeasy. To keep everything clean, there's a Champion dish machine in the dish room as well.

Javier Esparza of Cocinas Institucionales, S.A. de C.V. in Tijuana was instrumental in placing the equipment at Oryx Capital and Nortico. Esparza called the Oryx project "a big challenge because there were old columns and we were very limited in space. But we relied on good equipment and all the variety of what Beverage-Air makes. It was a challenging project, but it turned out very nice."

Ibarra did his homework before deciding on the products from the Ali Group companies.



"In the process of deciding and approving this project," says Esparza, "the NAFEM Show 2015 was around the corner in Anaheim. Ruffo had done his homework and was bidding with other brands and suppliers. I had the chance to take him to every booth and talk to the teams at the show. He was convinced on the Ali Group brands. They were all wonderful, and he's very happy with the service."

Ibarra says. "I couldn't be happier with the selection Javier helped us make. The equipment works flawlessly."

Erica Motes, Vice President of Sales for Beverage-Air, echoes that the success of Oryx Capital is due to a team effort. "Chef Ruffo, Javier and I met at NRA in 2015 to ensure every detail from aesthetics to functionality was taken into account," she says. "It's very rewarding to work with a chef who has such a high level of engagement throughout the process. There is nothing better than witnessing a culinary vision come to fruition while using your company's equipment."

Oryx Capital and Nortico are on the forefront of the exciting culinary scene in Tijuana, which Esparza calls a "big moment" the city is experiencing. "Oryx Capital is one of those projects that really stepped it up," he says. "Chef Ruffo's commitment to quality is what's drawing more and more customers into the restaurant and bar. He's always serving the best, and the results are amazing."

[www.beverage-air.com](http://www.beverage-air.com)

**"I couldn't be happier with the selection. The equipment works flawlessly."**



A Champion dish machine makes quick work of dirty dishes.