

## Pillbox Tavern adds casual dining touch to Solana Beach's restaurant row

By [Kristina Houck](#) 6 A.M.NOV. 1, 2014



Pillbox Tavern in Solana Beach.

Expanding Solana Beach's restaurant row, [Pillbox Tavern](#) opened Oct. 18 two blocks from the ocean.

The contemporary beach bar and restaurant, named after the beach at nearby Fletcher Cove Park, is at 117 W. Plaza St.

"Solana Beach is underserved to casual, bar-type restaurants, compared to Pacific Beach and downtown San Diego," said co-owner Leigh Gibson, who opened the new eatery with partners Mike Garcia and Adam Jacoby and strategic partner Justin La Frantz.

"It just seems like this community was looking for something new and fresh, and that's what we've tried to provide them with."

From a black bean and veggie quesadilla to fish tacos, the new bar and restaurant features a rotating selection of local beers on tap and a menu of burgers, wings sandwiches, salads and desserts. Headed by Chef Shelly Velez, the former chef of Guava Beach Bar & Grill in Mission Beach, Pillbox Tavern's ceviche, coconut shrimp and marinated steak tips have already become popular dishes.

"We have a lot of health-conscious items as well as your standard staples," said Gibson, who has more than 20 years of professional and operational experience in the nightclub, restaurant and bar industry. "We also plan on expanding the menu over time."

A Pacific Beach resident, Gibson is the founder of Dirty Birds, a popular wings spot just steps from the beach on Mission Boulevard. He also opened the La Jolla Brewing Company and The Commons in downtown San Diego. Gibson's business partner, Garcia, is the owner and operator of Saddle Bar, which is next door to Pillbox Tavern.

"Pillbox Tavern is filling the void in the community of a fresh, family-friendly environment," Gibson said. "We have a full bar, but we also have a kids' menu. We encourage families to come."

Pillbox Tavern is open from 4-10 p.m. weekdays and noon to 10 p.m. on weekends. Starting Nov. 3, the new bar and restaurant will begin opening for lunch at 11 a.m. Monday through Friday. On Nov. 7, Pillbox Tavern will unveil its brunch menu and open at 9 a.m. on weekends. The establishment will also extend its hours to midnight on Fridays and Saturdays.

Visit [pillboxtavern.com](http://pillboxtavern.com).