

# The New York Times

## Smokers Are Welcome at This Upper East Side Bar

Like other throwbacks from the 1990s, smoking in bars is making a comeback — or trying to. Sugar East, which opened on the Upper East Side last April, has a tobacco license thanks to the previous tenant, Merchants NY Cigar Bar, making it one of the rare places in New York where smokers don't need to huddle on the sidewalk.

But there's more to this dark, midcentury-modern-styled den than smoking. It also offers serious cocktails by Jeremy Strawn, a bartender who made a name for himself at the Mulberry Project and the Standard, High Line hotel.

### THE PLACE

The southwest corner of East 62nd Street and First Avenue is dominated by a loud sports bar called Treadwell Park. But don't be alarmed: This is not your destination (though it is owned by the same company). On First Avenue, you'll find a narrow staircase that descends into a spacious and mellow lounge with high-coffered ceilings, wood paneled walls and enormous U-shaped banquettes with ceramic ashtrays. An updated AtmosAir filtration system keeps the air relatively clean.



### THE CROWD

It's date night. On a recent Friday, men in their 30s and 40s were accompanied by their generally younger female dates, drinking and flirting throughout the darker corners of the lounge. Occasionally, a group of business-casual bros would take a table, but leave after a round when they realized the romantic mood. Smokers were fairly sparse; only four people lit up over a few hours.

### THE PLAYLIST

Top 40 gives way to deeper club sounds after 9 p.m., with a rotating roster of D.J.s on Thursdays and weekends.

### GETTING IN

The street-level entrance on First Avenue is supposed to be unmarked and discreet, but velvet ropes and a red carpet make it hard to miss.

### DRINKS

Mr. Strawn's inventive cocktail menu features odd combinations, with each drink taking its name from a key ingredient like Beet (\$16), Charred Lemon (\$16) and Smoke (\$16). Small bites include tuna tartare (\$15), sliders (\$16) and vegetable sushi (\$12). You can also buy packs of cigarettes, including Parliament, Marlboro Light, Camel Blue and American Spirit (\$17). And, just like the old days, the bar has its own branded Sugar East matchbooks (free).