

GOOD COCKTAILS?
WE'VE HAD A FEW.
BUT WHAT REALLY
MAKES A STANDOUT
BAR SHINE? THE
PEOPLE DOING THE
SHAKING, STIRRING,
AND ENTERTAINING.

THE BEST BAR- TENDERS IN AMERICA

by EMMA JANZEN & ALISON MILLER

photography by JODY HORTON, DAVE LAURIDSEN, & KEVIN MIYAZAKI



the
CONVERSATION
STARTER

KAREN GRILL

SASSAFRAS LOS ANGELES

She makes a mean Manhattan, but it's her exceptional people skills that turn new customers into regulars. **GOOD TALK** "I love talking to strangers. The situation is always new and intriguing. I never got that out of sitting behind a desk." **CAMARADERIE** "L.A. is a big town, but everyone in the industry knows and respects one another. We're raising the bar for eating and drinking, especially in regards to hospitality."

PAUL McGEE THREE DOTS AND A DASH CHICAGO



Though his name is inseparable from the modern revival of tiki cocktails, that's only one area of Paul McGee's expertise. He creates drink menus for four other Chicago bars, with themes ranging from BBQ to Italian.

STUDY HOUR "I read a lot: old cocktail books, new cocktail books, blogs. I try to carve out a couple hours every day for reading." **LIBERTY** "People in Chicago are very open to trying new things. It allows us bartenders to go wild." **MODERN TIKI** "I pay homage to the classics, but I like to experiment with spirits that weren't available in tiki's heyday."

the
ENCYCLOPEDIA



ABRACADABRA
McGee uses dry ice to dress up a tiki classic, Zombie Punch.

ANOTHER ROUND

THE JOKESTER Trevor Easter at San Diego's Noble Experiment has an exacting eye, but prompt him for a pun and you'll be laughing till last call. **THE SONGBIRD** Abigail Gullo's menu at SoBou in New Orleans is full of surprises, none more delightful than the melody she'll sing as she serves you.

the
ADVOCATE



IVY MIX CLOVER CLUB BROOKLYN

Four years ago, Mix co-founded Speed Rack, a traveling competition that shines a light on top female bartenders across the country while raising money for breast cancer research. **PROGRESS** "Some of the best bars in the world are headed up by women. That wasn't happening just three years ago." **GET TO IT** "Set a goal, and put one foot in front of the other. Determination will get you everywhere in life."

Raise the (Home) Bar

You've stocked the basics; now it's time to embellish. We asked Jackson Cannon, bar director of The Hawthorne and Eastern Standard in Boston, to recommend four riveting bottles.



YELLOW CHARTREUSE
"You may have heard of green chartreuse, the intense, herbaceous liqueur made by monks in the mountains of France. Yellow is slightly sweeter and has a hint of saffron, thus the dramatic color. It blends beautifully in a Manhattan variant called the Greenpoint."



AMARO NONINO
"This slightly bitter liqueur with a touch of spice is perfect for sipping at the end of a meal, but it also mixes well. The Paper Plane is an example of how the texture and spice elevate a simple bourbon sour to something dynamic and memorable."



LILLET
"This iconic fortified wine from France is infused with cognac and citrus. It's delicious on its own as an on-the-rocks aperitif, but it's also a beautiful addition to a Vesper, a cousin to the martini made popular by James Bond."



NOILLY PRAT AMBRE VERMOUTH
"This richer expression of vermouth has a flavor profile of cinnamon, candied orange, and plump raisin, making it the perfect accompaniment to the season's sweet and savory desserts. Drink it on ice with a twist of orange peel."

the
ENTREPRENEUR



The co-founder of two pioneering New York City cocktail bars has co-authored two books and created a line of handcrafted mixers. His most recent endeavor: a spirits company called The 86 Co. **BUSINESS WISDOM** "Build a concept on substance, not gimmicks. Always have a plan, but adapt to reality as it's served up to you." **FATHERHOOD** "I have three daughters, and I've finally learned what it means to be present at home. It took me years to really understand what that meant. I travel a lot, but there's nothing like coming home."

JASON KOSMAS THE 86 CO. AUSTIN



the
BARTENDER'S
BARTENDER



MICKEY MORAN

THE BELMONT CHARLESTON

Need a drink and a late-night snack? Head to Mickey Moran's cloistered King Street bar. You'll be in good company: It's the after-hours gathering spot for the city's best bartenders. **COMFORT ZONE** "I was brought up in the service industry, so I wanted to create a place where I'd want to go: a place where you could get a good cocktail and something to eat after your shift." **CAREER PATH** "I started bartending at a place called Dini's by the Sea in Carlsbad, California. To learn, I hung around after work and came in on my days off. I remember the head bartender telling me, 'I'll show you how to bartend, but you have to promise you won't end up tending bar for the rest of your life like me.' Here I am, 25 years later."

FRIENDS IN ODD PLACES

TOP BARTENDERS WHERE YOU'D LEAST EXPECT THEM



BOWLING ALLEY

Tacy Rowland whips up refreshing, citrusy drinks with speed and grace at Bôl in Vail, Colorado, the ski town's No. 1 spot for bowling and craft cocktails. Best job perk? Knocking down a few pins before or after a shift.



UNDERGROUND

The Midwest's mixing maestro, **Ryan Maybee**, is an authority when it comes to devising simple, balanced cocktails with big flavors, which he doles out from the bar at Manifesto, in the basement of Kansas City's historic Rieger Hotel.



GAS STATION

John Fausz employs a variety of rare spirits to concoct delicious, unique drinks at Olio, a filling station turned cocktail bar in St. Louis. His specialty: unearthing unsung antique cocktail recipes and reviving them for a modern crowd.

He was one of the first to start tinkering with homemade syrups, bitters, and other ingredients that now elevate bar programs across the country. That bottled Negroni you had in Boston? It was probably inspired by Morgenthaler's work. **POINT OF PRIDE** "My ginger beer recipe. I see house-made ginger beer on menus all the time, and when I taste it, I'm like, 'Yep, that's based off my recipe,' which is such a huge honor for me." **HOME TIP** "Pick one drink, master it, and then make it your own. Try different proportions and spirits. Make it for your friends whenever they come over. That's the best thing you can do."

JEFFREY MORGENTHALER

CLYDE COMMON PORTLAND, OR

the
D.I.Y.-ER



ANOTHER ROUND

THE MENTOR The Regent Cocktail Club's veteran barkeep **Julio Cabrera** schools Miami bartenders in drink-making and Cuban culture, one cocktail at a time. **THE QUICK DRAW** Speed and precision are **Caitlin Laman**'s forte. See her in action when the crowds form at San Francisco's Trick Dog.

Gifts That Keep On Giving

Bring bartender expertise home with these notable bottles and books.



CRAFTHOUSE COCKTAILS
One of the country's savviest bartenders, **Charles Joly**, recently left his post at The Aviary in Chicago to pursue independent ventures, but you can still taste his work with this line of bottled cocktails. \$20; crafthousecocktails.com



DEATH & CO.
A compendium of over 500 recipes from one of America's foremost cocktail bars (Death & Co. in New York City), courtesy of its founders **David Kaplan** and **Alex Day**. \$40; deathandco.com



BALSAM AMERICANO
Chicago bartender and spirits developer **Adam Seger**, creator of Hum, a botanical spirit tinged with hibiscus and kaffir lime, teamed with Rare Tea Cellar and Boyd & Blair distillery to create this herbal aperitif. \$22; balsamspirits.com



LIQUID INTELLIGENCE
An exploration of the science behind exceptional drinks, from **Dave Arnold** of Booker and Dax in New York City: It's complete with everything from a beginner's homemade soda recipe to advanced techniques like proper liquid nitrogen practices. \$35; www.norton.com

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DINA AVILA (MORGENTHALER)

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JODY HORTON (MORAN)

Picture Show

Immerse your Instagram feed.



Naren Young
New York City
@FORKANDSHAKER
Bacchanal's resident cocktail expert eats well, drinks well, and documents his epicurean adventures with reckless abandon.



Jim Meehan
Portland, OR
@MIXOGRAPHY
The legendary barman behind PDT in New York City is a recent Pacific Northwest transplant who captures the faces and places of the industry with a curious eye.



Matthew Biancaniello
Los Angeles
@EATYOURDRINK
Drool-worthy snapshots of gorgeous cocktails tempt and inspire as they fill the feed of this all-star roving bartender.



Julie Reiner
New York City
@MIXTRESSNYC
The queen of Clover Club shares new drink discoveries and behind-the-scenes glimpses from the venerable Brooklyn cocktail joint.

CATEGORY KILLERS

WHEN IT COMES TO HONING A SPECIALTY, NO ONE DOES IT BETTER.



PUNCH

You wouldn't expect a bar called Franklin Mortgage & Investment Co. to serve punch, but Philly barman **Mike Treffeinh** happens to be a knockout at it. "There's something very special about drinking from the same vessel with people," he says.



WHISKEY

Jamie Boudreau loves whiskey so much that he opened a temple to the spirit in Seattle. Of the roughly 3,500 bottles of liquor at Canon, 2,500 are whiskey—making it one of the largest collections in the world.



COBBLERS

A refreshing, fortified wine-based cocktail called the cobbler was in vogue from the 1850s to the 1870s, and then it all but disappeared. At Bellocq in New Orleans, **Sal Agnello** is making sure the drink never goes out of style again.



BRIAN FLOYD

WEATHER UP AND HALF STEP AUSTIN

This big-hearted bartender started the Barman's Fund, a multi-city organization that prompts bars to donate tips from one shift a month to local charities. To date, they've raised over \$200,000. **LOCAL TIES** "Meeting people is part of a bartender's daily routine. This puts us in a unique place to be community organizers." **CUSTOM-MADE** "People make the Barman's Fund their own. The New York City chapter founded the Free Medication Program for the Brooklyn Free Clinic; in New Orleans, they organize blood drives and volunteer their time with local charities." **GIVE A LITTLE** "I think anyone can be a significant help to those around them. No matter what it is that you're good at, you can find a way to use that for the good of your community."



the PLACEMAKER



AGAVE SUAVE
At The Pastry War, Alba's medium is mezcal.

ALBA HUERTA

JULEP HOUSTON

To walk into Julep, Alba Huerta's ode to Southern cocktails and culture, is to enter a different time and place. No cocktail comes without an illuminating origin story. She also co-owns The Pastry War, where she schools Houstonians on mezcal, Mexico's smoky native spirit.

PEACE OF MIND

"I do yoga several times a week. It really clears the attic for me and enables me to stay creative."

MY FAVORITE PLACE

"The Menil is a private art collection in the Montrose neighborhood of Houston, where I live. It's free to get in, and its design and natural light makes it feel like a home."

ALBA'S GIFT TO YOU!
Post your cocktail pics to social media using **#southwestmag**, and you could win a gourmet gift box from Mouth.com, curated by Alba. (Or, buy one at mouth.com/southwest and use **SOUTHWEST15** for 15 percent off.)

ANOTHER ROUND

BORN TO BARTEND As the adept proprietor of Williams & Graham in Denver, third-generation barman *Sean Kenyon* prolongs the legacy. **THE HERALD** *Khristian de la Torre* is spreading the gospel of good cocktails with influential bars in Mexico City: M.N. Roy, Maison Artemisia, and Gin Gin.

Recipes & Tools to Toast the Season

We asked **Erick Castro** of Polite Provisions in San Diego for his cocktail toolkit.

1 BARCONIC JIGGER "It's simple and inexpensive. When I'm using one, it feels like an extension of my arm." \$1; barproducts.com

2 KUHN RIKON PEELER "This simple peeler is perfect for making a citrus twist. It stays sharp for a long time and works like a dream." \$7; amazon.com

3 KORIKO HAWTHORNE STRAINER "This tool single-handedly changed the way I strain cocktails. There's no need to fine-strain your drinks, because the coils are so tight that they get out any excess and leave drinks silky smooth." \$15; cocktailkingdom.com

4 TEARDROP BAR SPOON "These spoons are ergonomic and comfortable to work with whether you're using them behind the bar or at home. Their movement is so fluid." \$18; cocktailkingdom.com

← TUXEDO (NO. 86) by Jason Kosmas

2 ounces Fords Gin
¾ ounce manzanilla sherry
½ ounce Luxardo
maraschino liqueur
1 barspoon absinthe
1 dash Regan's orange
bitters

Combine all ingredients in a mixing glass. Add ice, and stir until chilled. Strain into a chilled coupe glass. Garnish with a lemon twist.

↓ THE MAJOR MOSES by Ivy Mix

2 blackberries
½ ounce simple syrup
1½ ounces Laird's bonded
applejack
½ ounce lemon juice
½ ounce Lillet rosé
¼ ounce egg white
1 dash Angostura bitters

In a shaker, muddle one blackberry with simple syrup. Add remaining ingredients. Shake until emulsified. Add ice, and shake again until chilled. Double-strain into a coupe glass. Garnish with a blackberry.

← ROBBINS FIZZ by Brian Floyd

1½ ounces Tito's vodka
2 ounces Pellegrino
Limonata
Pom blueberry juice

Top vodka with Pellegrino Limonata and a splash of juice. Garnish with a lemon wheel and a mint sprig.

← BEER AND LOATHING by Karen Grill

½ ounce honey syrup
¾ ounce Aperol
½ ounce lemon juice
¾ ounce grapefruit juice
2 sprigs marjoram
Ommegang Hennespin
(or other saison)
Angostura bitters

Make honey syrup by mixing equal parts honey and hot water. Cool. Shake honey syrup, Aperol, citrus juices, and marjoram with ice. Strain into an ice-filled Collins glass. Top with beer. Add a couple dashes of bitters. Garnish with a marjoram sprig and a grapefruit peel.

→ D.I.Y. GINGER BEER by Jeffrey Morgenthaler

1 ounce ginger juice
2 ounces finely strained
lemon juice
3 ounces simple syrup
10 ounces cold water

Combine all ingredients. Using a soda siphon, pour into canister, screw on lid, charge with CO₂, shake once, and refrigerate.