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Clockwise from top: Carmen Troesser, Greta Rybus, NASHCO Photography, Jonathan Cooper

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Cover Photo: Hayden Stinebaugh
On the Cover: Bar manager Chris Allen at The Aladdin Sane, Detroit

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Clockwise from top left: Matty Newton, John Valls, courtesy of Ten to One, John Valls, Matty Newton, Eric Medsker, Renee Erickson, Kyle Ledebor

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Editor's Note

Flip the Page

Every year, as January 1 rolls around, I can't help but feel a big case of the Sunday Scaries.

Which is understandable. Starting a new year is like starting a new week, albeit on a much grander scale. The warm comfort of the holiday season is like a pronounced weekend in its way—but now, it's time to get back to normal life. Peering forward at the calendar, it's easy to feel a bit of uncertainty. The year ahead is going to be—well, who knows? Like every year, 2025 promises to be filled with mysteries big and small. While some of those surprises may be challenging, we also have the certainty of good times, and good places with good people, to keep spirits lifted as we pave our way through the year.

For more than a decade now, our team of writers and editors has worked hard to produce the Imbibe 75, our annual list of inspiring people and places that we think will help shape the way we drink. So despite any uncertainty, allow us to make a few predictions. First: We'll need to discover (or rediscover) places filled with joy. We've got a slew of recommendations on this year's list, from the familiar neighborhood-bar trappings of Gilly's House of Cocktails in San Diego (page 78) and Johnny's in Los Angeles (page 69), to comfortable cocktail dens like Press Club in Washington, D.C. (page 42) and Nightbloom in New Orleans (page 61), to warming daytime destinations like Bardo teahouse in Portland, Oregon (page 58) and Yafa coffeehouse in Brooklyn (page 70), to Bar Grale in Louisville, Kentucky (page 42), which is making itself into an indispensable wine destination, and Lost Lantern Whiskey (page 42), a Vermont haven for whiskey lovers.

Other predictions? We'll want to hear from engaged, enlightening people who are doing their best to make each day better than the one before. And this Imbibe 75 is filled with them, like bartender Mari Howe (page 66), who is helping her Maui community recover following devastating fires; brewer Wesley Keegan (page 58), who's betting big on beer and on his brewing team; and distiller Howard Conyers (page 51), who's sharing the culinary history of Black families in the rural South, one bottle of moonshine at a time.

There's also Kyo Dominick (page 75), who overcame a career-ending dance injury and became an up-and-coming wine pro, and Natasha Bahrami, who's doing her best to help everyone discover gin's inherent beauty (page 71).

This is just a taste of the people and places you'll find in the pages ahead—all sure to inspire your future exploration of the drinkscape. An epic case of Sunday Scaries aside, there's a lot to look forward to in the days ahead.

Cheers,



Paul Clarke
Editor in Chief



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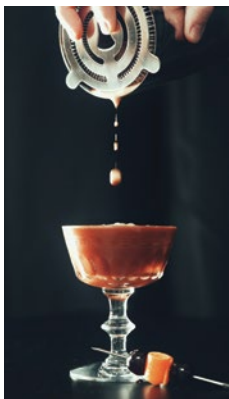
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For more of this year's Imbibe 75, head to imbibemagazine.com where you'll find more with Howard Conyers on *Radio Imbibe*: tune in at imbibemagazine.com/podcast. Read about Erick Castro at Gilly's House of Cocktails on his quest to preserve the neighborhood bar, and get an inside look at The Aladdin Sane in Detroit. Plus, find recipes like She'll Come, She'll Go from The Aladdin Sane and the coffee-based Reading Nook from Morgan Eckroth.



Clockwise from top left: Howard Conyers; The Aladdin Sane in Detroit; The Aladdin Sane's She'll Come, She'll Go; Gilly's House of Cocktails; Morgan Eckroth's Reading Nook.

Clockwise from top left: Jonathan Cooper, Hayden Stinebaugh, Hayden Stinebaugh, Garry Allard, Morgan Eckroth

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Compiled by Penelope Bass
and Emily Saladino

What We're Drinking Now SirDavis

There's no right or wrong time of year to drink whiskey, but it's hard to deny the appeal of a fortifying dram when temperatures start to drop. The initial bottling from SirDavis, the label founded last fall by Beyoncé Knowles-Carter in partnership with Moët Hennessy and esteemed distiller Bill Lumsden, is poised to fill glasses and warm hearts this winter. Named for Knowles-Carter's paternal great-grandfather, a moonshiner named Davis Hogue, SirDavis' debut expression has spicy rye notes offset by toffee, clementine, and dried cranberry flavors. The round palate gets its sweetly fruited finish from time spent in Pedro Ximénez casks. Billed as an American whiskey, the mash bill consists of 51 percent rye and 49 percent malted barley. It shines in an Old Fashioned and makes an elegant Hot Toddy, but we're partial to sipping SirDavis straight or with a drop of water—ideally in front of a fireplace while snow falls outside. (To learn more about SirDavis blender and global head of advocacy, Cameron George, head to page 69.) *reservebar.com*, \$89.99



At the Market: Persimmon



Appearing like neglected holiday ornaments on barren trees, persimmons come into their prime in the depth of winter when the cold speeds their ripening. The rusty orange fruit is native to East Asia and still predominantly cultivated in China, but the trees can also be found throughout the U.S. (with an American variant native to the East Coast) from Connecticut to Florida to Texas and California. At Sama Sama Kitchen in Santa Barbara, they use sweet Fuyu persimmons in The Monkey, Crab, and Persimmon Tree cocktail, which takes its name from a Japanese folktale. “This cocktail celebrates the delicate and often-overlooked flavor of persimmon,” says Alana Bailey, lead bartender at Sama Sama Kitchen. Processing the fresh fruit into a sweet purée concentrates the flavor and makes it easy to work with behind the bar. “The fruit brings sweetness and faint earthy undertones, which pairs beautifully with both light and dark rum,” says Bailey. “Campari adds just the right amount of bitterness, creating a layered yet approachable cocktail.”

THE MONKEY, CRAB, AND PERSIMMON TREE

1 oz. white rum
1 oz. aged rum
¾ oz. persimmon purée
½ oz. fresh lemon juice
¼ oz. Campari

Tools: shaker, strainer, fine strainer
Glass: Nick & Nora
Garnish: fresh bay leaf

Shake all of the ingredients with ice, double strain into a chilled glass, and garnish.

Persimmon Purée: Peel then dice 1 Fuyu persimmon into ½-inch cubes. Combine the fruit in a pot with 1 cup of water, 1 cup of sugar, and ⅛ of a scraped vanilla bean (or ¼ tsp. vanilla extract). Simmer for 25 minutes, then cool and purée mixture. Keeps refrigerated for 1 week or frozen for 6 months.

*Alana Bailey and Christian Krüeger
Sama Sama Kitchen
Santa Barbara, California*

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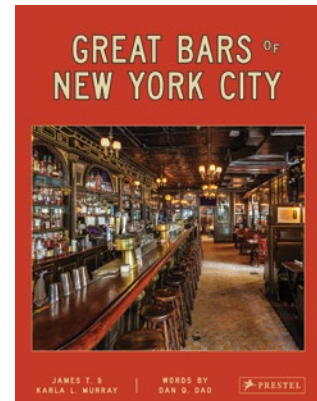


Raw Honey Trio

A pantry must-have for Hot Toddy season, this set of raw honeys from Portland, Oregon's Jacobsen Salt Co. highlights the unique flavors that can be found in single-origin honey, from buckwheat to blackberry. \$26, jacobsensalt.com

Great Bars of New York City by James and Karla Murray and Dan Q. Dao

An homage to one of the world's legendary drinking cities, this new coffee-table book features full-page photography by James and Karla Murray and words by journalist Dan Q. Dao. Explore 30 of the storied establishments of New York City, from historic Fraunces Tavern to game-changing cocktail bar Please Don't Tell to the landmark Stonewall Inn. \$40, bookshop.org



MiiR Tumbler

From tailgating to beach bonfires to the humble commute, the MiiR Tumbler sets the standard for keeping a spectrum of beverages either hot or cold for hours. Stainless steel with double-walled vacuum insulation, the 12-ounce tumbler still easily fits in a cup holder and the durable powder-coated exterior comes in nearly a dozen colors, like this new speckle design. \$22.95, miir.com



Aiden Precision Coffee Maker

The pros at Fellow have given an upgrade to the countertop brewer with the new Aiden Precision Coffee Maker. Brewing pour-over style coffee at the touch of a button, the machine has both pre-programmed and customizable brew profiles to dial in temperature, coffee-to-water ratio, bloom time, and more. The interchangeable brew basket makes brewing a pot for 10 as easy as a single cup. \$365, fellowproducts.com

Cheeky Syrups

Founded by beverage-industry vet April Wachtel, Cheeky makes juices and syrups that are bar quality, shelf stable, and made from real ingredients rather than flavor extracts. Their trio of new offerings includes a sweet and spicy Habanero Hot Honey, a rich Salted Marcona Almond Orgeat, and a Decaf Espresso Syrup for all the flavor sans the caffeine. \$10-\$15/4 oz., cheekycocktails.co



Craighill Best Wine Key

A collaboration between Brooklyn-based design studio Craighill and sommelier André Hueston Mack, the Best Wine Key is a sturdy tool that lives up to its name with a serrated foil cutter, multistage ratchet arm for easy extraction, crown cap bottle opener, and nonslip grip in Mack's signature red. \$98, bespokepost.com



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Anatomy of a Drink: Carajillo

Bolstering one's coffee with a shot of booze is more or less a universally accepted practice, regardless of time of day or occasion. The exact origins of Spain's version, the Carajillo, remain up for debate. Some point to Spanish soldiers in Cuba adding rum to their coffee to muster the *coraje* needed for battle, while others have suggested the drink's roots are in southern Spain's Andalusia region, with the name derived from the Spanish expletive *carajo*. It's perhaps a fitting sentiment while doctoring your cup—*why not?*

The drink has since migrated overseas, becoming popular in Latin American countries and Mexico City in particular, where a Carajillo can be found on virtually any bar menu. The go-to booze these days is also a Spanish export, Licor 43—a sweet, botanical liqueur with notes of vanilla and citrus—thanks to savvy marketing by the brand. The drink has been on the menu at Mexico City institution Contramar “since always,” notes operations director Armando Camacho. “However, it really became popular shortly after the pandemic, when the Licor 43 brand made a significant advertising effort.”

The stateside popularity of Espresso Martinis and their ilk have extended an affinity for coffee-based cocktails more broadly, making the Carajillo a perfect two-ingredient fit for any hour of the day. “The acidity of the coffee goes very well with the sweetness of the liqueur—it’s perfect after an abundant meal,” says Camacho. “It often happens to us that a table full of people orders Carajillos, and the next table sees it and orders a round for themselves. It’s a cocktail that you crave when you see it.”

INGREDIENTS

3 oz. Licor 43
3 oz. fresh espresso, cooled to room temperature or chilled

TOOLS: shaker, strainer

GLASS: snifter

GARNISH: orange twist

TO MAKE: Brew 3 oz. of espresso per drink and cool to room temperature or chill in the fridge to prevent excess dilution. In a shaker filled with ice, add chilled espresso and Licor 43. Shake well until creamy and frothy, then strain into the glass filled with fresh ice, and garnish.

Recipe
courtesy of
Contramar,
Mexico City

TIP

The Carajillo is as much a coffee drink as it is a cocktail—brewing the espresso fresh, and using a high-quality coffee, will have a big impact on the final flavor.



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Three Ways: Gibson

It all started as a riff on a dry Martini. The person responsible for mixing the first Gibson is up for debate, but most historians agree that *someone* created this bitters-free Martini variation at a San Francisco members' club in 1898. Over the course of the next 125-odd years, the Gibson became a classic in its own right, gaining a signature pickled onion garnish and inspiring iterative variations of its own. With the savory flavors of dirty Martinis captivating contemporary drinkers, Gibsons are ascendant at cocktail bars nationwide. Bartenders incorporate herbal infusions or housemade mignonettes, opt for gin or vodka bases, and experiment with proportions. It goes to show that what's old can become new again (and again).

Brass Poppy's Gibson. At the lobby bar in Austin's chic Hotel Van Zandt, you can order your Gibson with vodka or gin; either way, it will be a theatrical affair. Lead bartender Curtis Janto's recipe is thrown repeatedly between mixing tins to chill and aerate the cocktail, which he feels develops the herbaceous and citrus notes of the drink. To make the brine and garnish, boil 2 parts Champagne vinegar, 1 part water, ¼ part granulated sugar, ⅓ part salt, ¼ part peeled and minced ginger, and ⅓ part peeled and minced black garlic, stirring until dissolved. Strain and pour over blanched and peeled pearl onions. Cool, cover, and refrigerate for at least 24 hours. To mix the cocktail, combine 2 oz. of gin or vodka with ½ oz. of Cocchi Americano, ¼ oz. of dry vermouth, and a barspoon of brine in an ice-filled shaker. At Brass Poppy, bartenders throw the cocktail into a second Boston shaker held at the hip; at home, you can stir the drink in the shaker, then strain into a chilled coupe and garnish with a pickled pearl onion.

Red Hook Tavern's Spanish Gibson. At Red Hook Tavern in Brooklyn, head bartender Conor Johns created this cocktail "as an answer to the overwhelming amount of calls for dirty Martinis we were receiving," he says. "The vermouth from the Basque region of Spain is what really makes this drink unique." He infuses Axta dry vermouth with charred onion and rosemary to create distinctive, herbaceous flavors. To make the infused vermouth, char 5 thick slices of peeled white onion over a flame on the grill or a stovetop. Let cool, then add to 750 ml of dry vermouth with 4 sprigs of fresh rosemary. Refrigerate for 36 hours, strain out the solids, then store in the fridge for up to 1 month. For the cocktail, combine 2½ oz. of London dry gin or grain-based vodka with ¾ oz. of infused vermouth and 3 dashes of lemon saline solution in a mixing glass with ice. Stir to chill, then strain



Eric Medsker

into a chilled Nick & Nora glass and garnish with a pickled pearl onion. To make the lemon saline solution, combine 1 cup of salt, 4 cups of water, and 2 halved lemons. Boil until the salt dissolves, then cool and strain into a bottle. The mixture will keep for 2 weeks in the fridge.

Tusk Bar's Mignonette Gibson. The popular raw bar menu at this sleek Manhattan spot inspired bar director Tristian Brunel to create this tart Gibson riff (pictured). "The shallot blended into the red wine vinegar gives it a fragrant allium note that's a bit less intense than a classic onion," he says, and "black pepper helps to bring out the traditional mignonette flavor profile." A 50/50 base of gin and blanc vermouth makes Tusk Bar's version easier-drinking than other Gibsons. "It's perfect with a set of oysters but delicate enough to stand alone," Brunel says. To prepare the mignonette, emulsify 750 ml of red wine vinegar, ½ cup of granulated sugar, ¼ cup of salt, 1 large peeled shallot, and 2 tablespoons black peppercorns in a blender. Strain through cheesecloth and refrigerate (will keep for up to 2 weeks). To mix the drink, combine 1½ oz. of blanc vermouth, 1½ oz. of gin, and ¼ oz. of mignonette vinegar in a mixing glass with ice. Stir to chill, then strain into a chilled Martini glass and garnish with a pickled onion.



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5 to Try: American-Made Sake

“Sake made in the States is ready for its close-up!” says Timothy Sullivan, pointing to the growing domestic industry, with new breweries opening regularly. Enamored by the complexity of sake, Sullivan has spent the past two decades exploring, learning, and promoting the category. A certified WSET Level 3 sake educator, Sullivan is also the founding president of the American Sake Association, and in 2020 launched his *Sake Revolution* podcast. Based in New York City and currently serving as the director of education at the Brooklyn Kura Sake Studies Center, Sullivan eagerly shares his recs for bottles of American-made sake. “We are now witnessing a unique American sake style emerge as more and more domestic producers pop up,” he says.

1 Brooklyn Kura, “Number Fourteen” Junmai Ginjo Nama

Brooklyn Kura was New York state’s first sake brewery when they opened their facility in 2018, and they continue to brew both traditional styles of sake as well as more experimental batches with ingredients like hops. “‘Number Fourteen’ is a flagship sake for the Brooklyn Kura brand,” says Sullivan. “Produced with domestically grown Yamadanishiki and Calrose rice and using New York City’s famously soft water from the Catskills region, the sake has a flavor that’s fresh and juicy with notes of melon.” \$35, tippsysake.com

2 Den, Yamada Nishiki, “Red Label” Junmai Ginjo

Yoshihiro Sako was a longtime bartender and sake sommelier. But to more fully understand sake, he wanted to brew it himself, founding Den Sake Brewery in Oakland in 2017. “The Den brand is truly small-batch sake,” says Sullivan, recommending the “Red Label” Junmai Ginjo. Made with Yamadanishiki sake rice grown in California’s Central Valley, the well-balanced sake displays bright and fruity characteristics with a hint of savory umami. \$34, truesake.com

3 Sequoia, Junmai Ginjo Nama

“Sequoia is a local brewery in San Francisco and produces a popular line of unpasteurized sake,” says Sullivan. Founded in 2015, Sequoia Sake specializes in these lively, unpasteurized sakes that highlight the brew’s fruity notes. “This Junmai Ginjo Nama is rich and velvety in texture, and is best enjoyed from a wineglass to capture the apple, citrus, and rice aromas,” Sullivan says. \$36.50, sequoiasake.com

4 Origami Sake, “A Thousand Cranes”

“Hot Springs, Arkansas, is one of the premier rice-growing regions in the United States,” explains Sullivan. With farmers such as Isbell Farms specializing in Japanese rice varieties, the region is contributing to the booming growth of domestic sake, and brewers like Origami Sake, founded in 2022, source directly from the farm. “Using hyper-local sake rice, they produce their ‘Thousand Cranes’ sake, which has a nice acidity and crisp finish,” says Sullivan. See drinkorigami.com for distribution.

5 Proper Sake, “The Diplomat” Junmai Ginjo Yamahai

A longtime chef with an interest in the alchemy of fermentation, Byron Stithem founded Proper Sake in 2016. “Stithem makes his sake in Nashville, Tennessee, and has become a champion of the Yamahai sake production method,” says Sullivan. The traditional approach to brewing relies on naturally occurring bacteria in the air to cultivate lactic acid. “This old-school, fermentation-starter method brings in extra depth of flavor, making this sake a standout.” \$28, propersake.co

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Day Trip: Marc Farrell Ten to One

Marc Farrell wants you to reimagine your rum. In 2019, the Trinidad-born, New York-based entrepreneur debuted Ten to One, a label that blends rums from across the Caribbean. (The company name alludes to a speech that Eric Williams, Trinidad and Tobago's first prime minister, gave in favor of the Caribbean Federation in 1962.) Its bottles have since won some 100 awards at bartenders' and spirits competitions. As founder and CEO, Farrell spends half of his time on the road, personally introducing craft Caribbean rum to more corners of the United States, and the other in his office. "There's an energy and excitement to being part of the New York ecosystem," he says. *As told to Emily Saladino*

6:30 a.m. I learned a long time ago, if I'm going to have time for myself during a workday, it has to be in the morning. Sometimes I play basketball or do a bit of yoga, or maybe some light reading. I just try to give myself a few hours to prepare for the day ahead.

9:00 a.m. I leave home and get to the office. The first basket of activities are triaging the email inbox. I like to have my challenges directly in front of me and know what's in there that I need to confront, so I'll run through it once and make a list of critical items. I also want to remove bottlenecks that I might be causing for my teammates, so I'll do that in the early morning so my teammates can be off to the races with their day.

10:00 a.m. The meetings are off in earnest. The team and I meet to build our plans and talk about sales growth. We try to be very analytically driven to identify new opportunities, to look at how we can get better, and focus on continuous improvement.

11:00 a.m. We sit down to taste rum as a team. We have a long list of things in the pipeline and do a lot on the product development side of things. For a tasting panel, we line up a few samples for the six or seven people in the New York office. I'm not overly precious about it: I believe that what you smell is what you smell, what you taste is what you taste. Everyone tastes and jots down their reactions, and then we share notes, pick favorites, and get a series of finalists. We taste together, everyone's vote counts, it's very egalitarian. We're all in this boat together.

1:00 p.m. Lunch doesn't always happen. More often than not, I'm eating lunch at my desk, trying to sneak a bite between meetings. I order from Ruby's, Westville, or Court Street Grocers for a sandwich if I want to reward myself.

2:00 p.m. I meet with our creative studio to run through a series of things in process: design, marketing campaigns, and packaging. We make all our creative materials in-house, everything you see—whether it's on social media, on a product, or at one of our events—all comes from a very small and intentional Ten to One team.

3:30 p.m. I have a slate of Zoom meetings and telephone calls with our board and our investors to discuss the business: sales, commercial strategy, S&OP [Sales and Operations Planning], and supply chain stuff.

5:00 p.m. I like to proactively carve out time for big-picture, creative work. Afternoon is when I am wide-eyed and that's when I force myself to get out of the weeds. [I focus on] setting costs for the next quarter, how to structure a team, what the next round of fundraising looks like. I have to proactively make time for that so I am not only looking at the minutiae of the day to day.

6:00 p.m. Rarely do I go straight home. There's a whole second shift you have to work after the office. Anything I'm doing in the evening, whether it's catching up with a friend or something more involved, is always going to be at a Ten to One account [a bar that serves the rum]. This is a business of practice, not of theory. You can gather good intelligence and get to know your people this way. It's a big part of my routine. There's an extraordinary community we've been able to create.

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How to make a **Fresh Yuzu Gimlet**

Glass Size: 8 oz. coupe glass

1 oz. **Monin Yuzu Purée**

2 oz. premium gin

1 oz. fresh lime juice

Pour the ingredients into a mixing
glass with 2/3 ice. Cap, shake, and
strain into a chilled serving glass.

Garnish with a lime wheel.



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Q&A with Rachel Harrison

When bars become globally recognized, or the next big cocktail trend sweeps the country, it's often thanks to the behind-the-curtain efforts of people like Rachel Harrison. Working in public relations for more than two decades, she now runs Rachel Harrison Communications (RHC) with three global offices and more than 120 clients—among them 12 bars on North America's 50 Best, 16 Michelin Stars, three James Beard Award winners, and too many more accolades to name. We sat down with Harrison to find out what happens behind the scenes, how global fame impacts a bar, and what surprising cocktail trend she may or may not have started. *By Penelope Bass*

Imbibe: Because so much of your job is invisible to the public, can you give us an explainer on what you do as a publicist?
Rachel Harrison: I like being behind the scenes. I like that my clients get 100 percent of the credit for the amazing things they're doing. But what's important for people to know is that no one is ever going to hire a publicist and suddenly become famous or top of the best-of list. But there are some misconceptions about that, and some people think PR people just pay off judges and pay off media. I don't have enough money to pay people off! A lot of what we do is to take the thoughts, the feelings, the ideas, and directions of the bar and distill it into a language that the media can understand and ultimately that consumers can understand. I think sometimes our bars and bartenders are so esoteric that they're smarter than their own good. They're wonderful at building bars and creating drinks, but they're not trained at creating messaging. There was one bar years ago, and their primary message was that they were sick of the "chapel of the bar" and waiting 15 minutes for a cocktail, so they were doing high-end cocktails but prebatching everything. Our pitch for that bar was: "Death to the 15-minute cocktail." We had to convince them to move forward with that message, and it worked. When they

Brendan Burke

opened, they had a line around the building. But all we can do is bring the horse to water. The client needs to make sure that the water is delicious. And the horse has a comfy seat.

How did you start in public relations, and how did your own company evolve?

I started in London doing fashion PR for Topshop. When I moved to New York, I wanted to be in fashion and no one would hire me because all my contacts were in London, but Susan Magrino gave me a shot with travel PR and some spirits accounts. Back in, like, 2004, spirits were very different; you shoved a drink in Paris Hilton's hand and took a photo. You weren't going into the nuances of the spirits. Then I became PR director for the Andaz [hotel] group and helped conceptualize that brand and launch their first half-dozen or so properties. They wanted to make their bars the bustling center of the hotels. Alchemy Consulting was creating the bars, so it was Toby Maloney, Joaquín Simó, and Jason Cott. I asked if I could join their bartending classes, and they took me under their wing. They taught me about things like Chartreuse, how to smell alcohol, shaking cocktails, stirring cocktails, the variations of Martinis ... I got a master class in cocktails and spirits over a two-year period. When I started my own company, I never thought I was going to be doing spirits. But Allen Katz [of New York Distilling Co.] asked if I would help launch his Ragtime Rye. After that, Portobello Road Gin came, Knappogue Castle came, some bars came into the fold, and then all of a sudden, half of our portfolio was spirits and bars. It was a very organic evolution, but one that I was incredibly passionate about. I loved that world because the people in the industry were so fun and exciting and smart. When the pandemic happened, we lost 80 percent of our business over five days—the only thing that saved us were our spirits clients. The people who taught me everything I know about spirits and bars are ultimately responsible for saving me during the pandemic.

What does it mean for a bar today to be named on the best-of lists? Can it make or break a business?

It 100 percent affects their business. When we were working with Dante and they won No. 1 in the world in 2019, the next day there was a line out the door. And when Superbuono won best new cocktail bar at Tales of the Cocktail and then No. 2 at World's 50 Best, you then couldn't get a reservation. I think the awards, for better or for worse, help a bar or restaurant or hotel just get more people through the door and thus more opportunities to show what they can do. But not all numbers on the list translate to higher revenue. And sometimes the amount of work that it takes to get on the list can be detrimental to the quality of the entity. I've seen a few clients be so obsessed with pop-ups and activations and getting out into the world, that they haven't been present at their own bars or restaurants. I've also seen a lot of our bartenders and bar owners suffer major exhaustion from traveling the world, only to come home to a full-time job. I think for a bar, the main

goal should be to create the best bar you possibly can. Be the most hospitable, create the best quality, create the best vibe, and if the awards come, then they come. And they will if you put all of your effort into that bar ... and maybe hire a publicist to tell the world.

What drinks trends have you seen come and go over the years, and how does that impact your work?

When I first entered into the cocktail space, it was very much the "church of the cocktail." That lingered for probably about 10 years, like 2004-05 to 2014-15. Then people started to bring fun back. They wanted a little bit of debauchery—going to a bar for social reasons became more important than worshipping the nine-ingredient cocktail. But what's nice is that now both have found their place, with emphasis on quality. We have bars where the energy is fun and the cocktails are banging. Then obviously I've seen the trend of low/no-ABV. You cannot walk into a bar today without seeing no-and-low options on the menu. I remember asking Alchemy Consulting in 2010 to come up with a nonalcoholic menu, and they were like, what? Often we're talking our clients *into* things. We don't like to capitalize on fads, but trends usually have more longevity. I remember talking a lot of my clients into the mini Martini trend, and it ended up getting a full-page story in the *Wall Street Journal*. Also, the Espresso Martini trend. We were working with Dante, but we also had Mr. Black, which was a new coffee liqueur at the time, and it made an incredible Espresso Martini. We started creating all these Espresso Martini promotions at Dante, and every time I would go with media or friends, I would order Espresso Martinis for the entire table, and I would have my employees do the same thing. It's like seeing a baked Alaska go through the room—by the time we left, every person had an Espresso Martini at their table. We worked with like 25 of the world's best bars and asked them to create Espresso Martini variations using Mr. Black, and then RHC created the Espresso Martini Festival in 2022. I do believe that a lot of the work that RHC did pushed the Espresso Martini forward. We literally made "fetch" happen.

What projects are you working with that you are particularly excited about?

I'm so excited about the AJABU Cocktail & Spirits Festival. Africa has been so underrepresented in the global drinks world that it's really exciting to showcase everything they are doing. To see the excitement of the bar teams in places like Ghana and Kenya and South Africa—there is so much passion there. And if you look at something like the GDP, it's projected to increase exponentially in Africa over the next 30 years. It really is the next frontier. I think we're going to see a lot more happening in Africa in every industry—in spirits, in food, in fashion, in art, in music. I think in the next 10 years, we're really going to see Africa come into its own on a more global stage. ■

Lost Flavors

“AN EXHILARATING TIPPLE” read the 1892 headline in the *New York Sun*. It topped an article about “teaberry”—an adult beverage that involved the infusion of applejack brandy with leaves and berries of the wild teaberry plant. “The odor of the combination is both apple blossoms and mountain teaberries, an odor which is so fascinating that the amount of the alcohol in the drink is forgotten.”

Applejack may be familiar. Teaberry perhaps less so.

Turns out, I was raised with the taste of teaberry—Clark’s Teaberry Chewing Gum, to be precise. It was my grandmother’s favorite; hence it was mine, and it was always a good day when she drove to the newsstand to restock her supply. Made by Clark Brothers Chewing Gum Company in Pittsburgh starting in 1886, teaberry gum had the bright, minty taste of a wintergreen Lifesaver with a sort of rubbery back bounce to it.

Teaberry disappeared from my life when my grandmother did. I rediscovered it decades later when I bought a cabin in the woods of eastern Maine. I began gathering random leaves and needles and bark to smell and taste, because, well, apparently that’s what you do when you move to the woods and have little better to do. I was thus intrigued by the aroma of cedar needles and sweet fern, and the inner bark of yellow birch. Then, one day, I gathered up some small, waxy leaves growing just inches off the forest floor. I crushed them, cupped my hands, and breathed in.

Whereupon I was 9 years old again. Smelling my cupped hands in the forest was all fine and well, but surely there was something else I could do with these. So I asked around, including one woodland creature named Bob Upham, an ancient local who always wore camo and always looked slightly aggrieved. Did local folks ever make anything with teaberry back in the day, I asked? He looked at me for a long while through glasses as thick as jelly jars then said, slowly, “Yes, they made tea out of it,” as if I were the dimmest person he’d ever had the misfortune to meet.

I tried making tea, and didn’t think much of it. The teaberry flavor was thin and distant, it seemed more cooked and grassy than fresh. So, I tried making an oleo saccharum—taking leaves and muddling them with sugar, then sealing them in a jar for a day. And this worked spectacularly. The sugar coaxed the oil out of the leaves, and the aroma was as heavy and pleasing as a freshly opened pack of gum. By adding water and lightly heating it, then straining out the leaves, I could produce a rich teaberry syrup that captured all the bright goodness.

From this I made teaberry soda. A lot of it. And I still drink much of it every summer. A bit of syrup with club soda yields

instant refreshment. I’ve tried mixing cocktails with the syrup, although without great success. That wintergreen note always seems to sit over on the side by itself, hoarding its flavor and refusing to play with others.

One year, the dour but brilliant New Orleans bartender Chris Hannah visited, and I tasked him to come up with a cocktail

using teaberry. He tried this and that, and I kept insisting that it wasn’t as delicious as teaberry soda. Whereupon he made me a glass of teaberry soda, added a shot of vodka, and handed it to me. The “shut up now” was silent.

Sifting through the archives of drink, I haven’t found much use for teaberry in cocktails—other than that applejack-infused variant. And frankly, when I tried that, the teaberry didn’t add all that much to the applejack, which is perfectly delicious on its own. (Indeed, infusing teaberry in any high-proof alcohol fell short, resulting in something that tasted less fresh, more like mulch.)

The internet is rife with commentary on flavors that were once popular but have since vanished. It’s a sort of clickbait nostalgia—flavors like Wild Cherry Jell-O and Toasted Almond Good Humor Bars and those strangely tangy-chalky purple Necco Wafers. Yet these aren’t lost flavors—simply discontinued products no longer produced in the factory.

Truly lost flavors are far more fascinating. These are flavors that were discovered in the wild, civilized for a time, and then, for one reason or another, exiled to the fading memories of the elderly. While some of these flavors have persisted—we all still recognize juniper, thanks to gin—others that were once everywhere are now nowhere. Such as spruce, another northern forest flavor. Spruce beer and spruce gum were keystone products of the 19th century, but it’s now relegated to niche brewers and adventurous distillers.

Clark’s Teaberry gum still exists, at least in name. It’s currently made in Mexico for First Source LLC, a candy and snack packager based out of Buffalo. I bought a pack online. It tastes of only the most distant echo of the past—not one my childhood would recognize. Fortunately, the woods of Maine are still lovely, dark, and deep. And the flavor is still out there for the picking. **By Wayne Curtis**



Matty Newton



Nux Alpina Walnut Liqueur

For three generations the Purkhart family has produced this all-natural walnut liqueur from the same family recipe, renowned for its balance and baking spice notes. Hand-picked walnuts steeped in grape brandy and infused with botanicals and spices, create a velvety liqueur that embodies winter's warmth. Savor it chilled, over dessert, on the rocks, or in a Walnut Old Fashioned. This winter, Nux Alpina is the perfect drink to warm up your evenings.

Walnut Old Fashioned

2 oz Bourbon
1 oz Nux Alpina Walnut Liqueur
0.5 oz Simple Syrup (1:1)
2-3 dashes Orange Bitters

Add ingredients to a mixing glass and stir.
Strain over fresh ice shards and garnish with orange peel.

taste test Rich yet balanced espresso blends make for a perfect winter cup.

Favor the Bold

Like a favorite sweater that fits just right, the comforting qualities of a well-honed espresso blend hit the mark for winter warmth. Highlighting richer, earthier flavors in the coffee like dark chocolate and toasted nuts, contemporary roasters are adept at finding a balance that doesn't lose the brighter, fruitier notes of quality specialty coffee. So whether you love a morning latte, an after-dinner espresso, or simply a full-bodied brew, here are six blends that deliver. **By Penelope Bass**

Sightseer Coffee, Hellacious Espresso Blend

\$18/12 oz., sightseercoffee.co

A women-founded and -run roastery in Austin, Sightseer aims to promote gender equity in the coffee industry, sourcing beans exclusively from female producers and women-run co-ops. Hellacious is a blend from Nicaragua and Guatemala that gets roasted medium, highlighting bright citrus flavors that are complemented by a brown sugar sweetness.



Alma Coffee, Essence Espresso Roast

\$18/12 oz., myalmacoffee.com

The fifth-generation farmers of Alma Coffee bring beans directly from their farms in Honduras to their roastery in Canton, Georgia. Crafted with an eye toward a traditional espresso profile, the Essence blend is roasted a skosh past medium-dark to ensure a rich flavor that stands up well to milk and syrups, highlighted by notes of dark chocolate and toasted almonds.



Huckleberry Roasters, Blue Orchid Blend

\$18/12 oz., huckleberryroasters.com

Working with a rotating seasonal blend of Central and South American coffees, Denver-based Huckleberry Roasters goes for classic and comforting with their house espresso Blue Orchid. Roasted medium, the full-bodied coffee is earthy and balanced, with sweet notes of chocolate and caramel that work well with or without milk.



Blueprint Coffee, Penrose Espresso Blend

\$22/12 oz., blueprintcoffee.com

Named for the illusion of the Penrose Triangle, this blend from St. Louis coffee roasters Blueprint also strives for “impossibility in its purest form” by crafting a perfectly balanced espresso—reliably delicious with or without milk. Though the seasonal selection of beans rotates, the Penrose blend dials in smooth, chocolate notes with toasty flavors of graham cracker and a hint of zippy lemon zest.



Portrait Coffee, Double Double

\$18/310 grams, portrait.coffee

The go-to for espresso drinks at Atlanta roaster Portrait Coffee, the Double Double is so-named for the win-win collaboration that it brings to the shelves. The Colombian offering comes from Unblended Coffee in Buga, which invests in young farmers looking to improve quality and transparency in the coffee chain. Bright but not acidic, the Double Double is smooth and sweet with flavors of caramel and a citrus note reminiscent of bergamot.



Cerberus Coffee, Wizard Cat

\$16/12 oz., cerberuscoffee.co

The Wizard Cat blend from barista-founded Cerberus Coffee in southern Oregon serves as their in-house espresso of choice, as well as the “ethical compass” of the company—proceeds from every bag are donated to organizations that support LGBTQI-plus resources. A blend of South American beans roasted to a medium level, the coffee is bright yet balanced, with fruity aromas and a sweet, milk chocolate flavor.



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Stovetop Stunners

We love Ferrari-sized chrome machinery as much as the next caffeine fiend, but there are other ways to brew quality espresso. Enter stovetop espresso makers, the handheld marvels that range from lo-fi devices to high-art machinery. Once you get the knack of calibrating steam pressure and extractions, the right model can deliver delicious drinks—and look quite chic on your countertop, too. **By Emily Saladino**

Orb One

\$190, crucialdetail.com

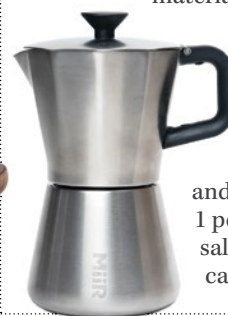
Why we like it: The Orb One can brew a single serving of espresso or 8 ounces of pour-over coffee in less than two minutes, and its eye-catching design does more than just look cool on your counter: The laser-drilled filter keeps the water flow even while the stainless steel “showerhead” feature maintains water temperature to prevent over-extraction. It weighs in at 3½ pounds, but its long handle is easy to maneuver. The wide base works on gas, electric, or induction stoves.



MiiR New Standard Moka Pot

\$59.95, miiir.com

Why we like it: This stylishly minimalist iteration on the classic moka pot can brew up to 10 ounces of espresso (approximately six servings) at a time. Available in black or gray, it weighs less than a pound and is made from non-corrosive stainless steel and recycled materials. A Certified



Evergreen and B Corp company, MiiR measures and offsets 100 percent of its carbon footprint and contributes at least 1 percent of its annual sales to environmental causes.

9Barista Espresso Machine

\$499, 9barista.com

Why we like it: A luxury option with style to spare, this model uses a patented twin-boiler system that creates 8-10 bars of pressure and regulates water temperature to brew gorgeous, crema-topped espresso. Made from solid brass with walnut finishings, it weighs a hefty 4 pounds but requires little handheld maneuvering. While admittedly not the easiest to clean, it's an effective brewer that looks beautiful on a range or countertop—an objet d'art with *raison d'être*.



Bialetti Moka Express

\$40, amazon.com

Why we like it: Since 1933, this Bialetti model has been the go-to stovetop espresso maker for households in and beyond Italy. Made from heavy-gauge aluminum, it weighs a little more than 1½ pounds, so it feels sturdy but not bulky in your hand. The wide base fits securely over most stovetop burners and evenly distributes heat, providing easy-to-monitor extraction. Best of all, it only requires warm water to clean—no soap, no dishwasher, no problem.



Collar Espresso Maker

\$106.95, nordicnest.com

Why we like it: For those who love Italian espresso and Nordic aesthetics in equal measure, this espresso maker succeeds on all fronts. It was created by Daniel Debiasi and Frederico Sandri for Stelton, the Denmark-based design studio. At nearly 1¾ pounds, it's heavier than other models, but the oak handle is comfortable to grip and the Teflon-coated stainless steel is durable and easy to clean. You can use it on gas and electric stovetops but not induction ranges.



Grosche Milano 3-Cup Stovetop Espresso Maker

\$31.99, grosche.ca

Why we like it: Available in five colors, this moka pot is compatible with gas, electric, propane, and glass stovetops (though not induction burners). The heat-safe handle is easy to grab and maneuver. Plus, as part of a philanthropic program called the Grosche Safe Water Project, every purchase helps fund 50 or more days of safe drinking water for communities in need.



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Spice World

Allspice dram derives its punchy power not from a mix of spices, but from dried, unripened allspice berries. Commonly found in the Caribbean and also known as pimento berry—hence the liqueur’s alternate name, pimento dram—the fruit is traditionally steeped in Jamaican pot-still rum long enough to impart intense flavors of nutmeg, star anise, and cinnamon into the base spirit. The process yields an exceptional modifier rightfully celebrated as a Caribbean liqueur, even though the most popular brand in the States, St. Elizabeth, is produced in Austria. (Other familiar brands include The Bitter Truth Pimento Dram, and Hamilton Pimento Dram.)

Underneath allspice liqueur’s spice and gentle sweetness is a nuanced, molasses-driven funkiness carried over from the liqueur’s rum base. This makes it an essential ingredient in the world of tropical drinks. It was the puzzle piece that allowed Zane Bentley, general manager at Frankie’s in Oceanside, California, to complete his Walk the Pier cocktail, a spin on the classic Mai Tai. “The goal behind the drink was to make it stand out on its own without making it too different from the original,” Bentley says. “The only way to do that was to substitute the traditional triple sec with allspice dram. The substitution works because it complements the flavors of the drink’s rums, citrus, and orgeat really well.”

The berries’ extracted flavors also deliver a warm, cozy vibe that’s ideal for seasonal drinks best served when the temperature drops. At Portland, Oregon, bar Hey Love, owner and beverage director Emily Mistell bridges the gap between the tropical and seasonal with A Gentleman’s Kaftan, adding a half-teaspoon of allspice dram to bind together ingredients like rum-based coconut liqueur and honey-ginger syrup. According to Mistell, the drink’s success hinges largely on nailing the precise allspice measurement. “We spent a fair amount of R&D to get that ‘just right’ balance in the cocktail,” she says. “Too little allspice dram, and you miss the bold spice. Too much, and it overpowers the drink.”

Allspice dram’s depth of flavor isn’t strictly beholden to specific months or niche cocktail categories. The Copper Canyon cocktail served at Attaboy in New York City bounces the liqueur’s spice off mezcal’s smokiness and reposado tequila’s slightly sweet agave notes, creating an indulgent, after-dinner sipper. “Allspice is the bar’s secret weapon. It can stand up to lots of sweet flavors, and it can keep a drink from falling flat on the back end,” explains Hunter Orahood, former Attaboy bartender and Copper Canyon’s creator. “It’s not necessarily crucial to have a bottle, but if you don’t have one, you’re missing out.” **By Rich Manning**

Walk the Pier

Allspice dram takes the place of triple sec for a spicy riff on the classic Mai Tai.

1 oz. white rum
¾ oz. fresh lime juice
½ oz. overproof rum
½ oz. allspice dram
½ oz. orgeat
8-10 dashes Angostura bitters

Tools: shaker
Glass: wine
Garnish: mint bouquet

Add the first 5 ingredients to a shaker with a few ice cubes and shake well until the ice has melted. Pour into the glass, fill with crushed or pebble ice, top with the bitters to float, then garnish.

Zane Bentley
Frankie’s, Oceanside, California

A Gentleman’s Kaftan

Tropical flavors and wintry vibes are bound together by allspice dram in this cold-weather sipper.

1½ oz. bourbon
¾ oz. honey-ginger syrup
½ oz. coconut liqueur (Hey Love uses Rhum Clément)
½ oz. fresh lemon juice
¼ oz. fresh orange juice
½ tsp. allspice dram
2 dashes Angostura bitters
Hot water, to top

Tools: barspoon
Glass: 10-oz. tempered glass mug
Garnish: lemon wheel and star anise

Preheat the mug with hot water. Mix all of the ingredients together, then pour into the warmed mug. Top with hot water and garnish.

Ginger-Honey Syrup: Combine 8 oz. of ginger syrup (store-bought is fine) with 4 oz. of honey in a small saucepan over low heat, stirring until combined. Cool, bottle, and refrigerate for use within 1 month.

Emily Mistell
Hey Love, Portland, Oregon

Copper Canyon

Allspice dram complements smoky-sweet notes from mezcal and reposado tequila for a complex, after-dinner sipper.

1½ oz. reposado tequila
½ oz. mezcal
¼ oz. crème de cacao
¼ oz. allspice dram
2 dashes orange bitters

Tools: barspoon
Glass: rocks
Garnish: lemon twist

Add all of the ingredients to a glass with a large ice cube. Stir 5 or 6 times, then garnish.

Hunter Orahood
Attaboy, New York City



St. Elizabeth
Allspice Dr

THE IMBIBE

By Betsy Andrews, Penelope Bass, Joshua M. Bernstein, Paul Clarke, Shana Clarke, Shayna Conde, Amy Bess Cook, Wayne Curtis, Jillian Dara, Max Falkowitz, Jennifer Fiedler, Chala June, Rich Manning, Laurel Miller, Caroline Pardilla, Emily Saladino, Robert Simonson, Christine Sismondo, Susannah Skiver Barton, and Elena Valeriote

INSPIRING PEOPLE AND
PLACES THAT WILL SHAPE
THE WAY WE DRINK IN 2025.

Janice Bailon,
bar manager at
Leyenda in Brooklyn.





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here are big plans brewing for 2025, and we're excited for where the new year will take us. Here's our annual list of 75 people and places sure to shape the drinks world in the months and years ahead. Find a favorite new cocktail bar or discover a coffee roaster to make part of your rotation, and meet the winemakers, distillers, and other drinks professionals who are leaving their own marks on the beverage industry and their communities. This list is just the beginning—head online to imbibemagazine.com to learn more about the 2025 Imbibe 75.

Tomo Johnson

It's important to have big goals. It's also important to know how to reach them. For Tomo Johnson, fully experiencing the world is high on the list, and bartending is a way to make that happen. "A big part of the draw of bartending is that it's very much international, connected worldwide," he says. "So if you get into that realm at the top of the game, you can pretty much go anywhere in the world. I've always wanted to see the world. That's been the dream." Originally from the Bay Area, Johnson first stepped behind the bar only a couple of years ago, inspired in part by a French-trained, detail-oriented chef at a Japanese soba spot in Oakland where he was working at the time. A bartending job at Oakland's Umami Mart gave him room to refine both his technique and his understanding of shochu and Japanese whisky ("I'm a Japanese person—

I should know about Japanese spirits, and Umami Mart is the best place to learn about those things," he says). This knowledge proved useful last year, when Johnson took the top prize for an original shochu cocktail he created for a competition organized by the Japan Sake and Shochu Makers Association. That success prompted a move to New York City last summer with the aim of deepening his understanding of Japanese bar technique while working at the best bar to learn that in Manhattan, Martiny's. Johnson is starting to reach his goals, but recognizes he's still near the beginning of his journey. "I'm still very new at this. I think I need to hunker down and learn for, like, the next decade," he says. "I'm going to be that backroom apprentice. I'm going to work at a bunch of places and learn as much as I can, and then find what I want to do, in my own style."

—Paul Clarke

Fionna Gemzon

Fionna Gemzon moved around a lot as a child. While St. Louis was where she (mostly) grew up, she traveled to cities like San Francisco and Omaha often enough to search for non-locational ways to establish a sense of home and belonging. That's where food came in. Born in the Philippines and then living in predominantly white neighborhoods, Gemzon found that ingredients similar to those from her homeland provided a deeper sense of community. "Being away from family and from any familiar comforts, food felt like the most direct line back," she says. So when Gemzon, who has worked in hospitality 12 years, had the opportunity to join the team at None of the Above, a speakeasy-style cocktail lounge in the subterranean levels of St. Louis' City Foundry, she came on board with all of her food memories and previously

unsung ideas. As the bar manager and general manager, Gemzon is piling on the local praise. Her Filipino heritage inspires her tendency to lean on high-acid and sweet-sour flavors behind the bar, which also makes the bar's Scantron-style cocktail questionnaire (for guests who want to try something new) particularly helpful. The menu aims toward luxury and technique-driven drinks while incorporating unique and nostalgic flavors. The Aranas cocktail combines a black pepper and bay leaf-infused rum with miso honey and calamansi lime purée to evoke the flavors of chicken adobo. Sharing her food culture is just one way that Gemzon is bringing new light to the once-dark tunnels of City Foundry. —Shayna Conde

**Fionna Gemzon at
None of the Above
in St. Louis.**





Carmen Troesser

Kiki Austin

It was a post-karate-class drink with a friend in Brooklyn where Kiki Austin had her first taste of sake. That curiosity bloomed into a full-time career, and today, Austin—the sake sommelier at Mujo, a Michelin-star Japanese restaurant in Atlanta—is excited to contribute to the greatly under-reported Black sake scene in the United States. “Black people are already in the [sake] industry, we just need to highlight them and their great work,” Austin says. “That will encourage other Black people to be more curious about sake and get into the industry.” Austin embarked on her educational journey into the world of spirits through the Culinary Institute of America. A move to Atlanta and back-of-house restaurant work pulled Austin’s curiosity in the direction of sommelier training. When the pandemic forced a pivot, Austin took a job in wine retail that serendipitously served to further her sake education. In the years that followed, Austin became a Certified Japanese Sake Advisor while also working as a sommelier in fine-dining establishments like Empire State South and then Piedmont Driving Club. While Austin is currently one of a handful of Gen Z sommeliers, she actively encourages others to enter the industry, willingly sharing resources and answering questions. “Explore what you’re curious about,” she says. “Go to your local shop, ask about tastings or education opportunities. ... Hit up your local library or bookstore and grab a book about sake or wine.” —S. Conde



Andrew Thomas Lee

Matta Café

Farm-to-cup coffee sounds like an appealing tagline, but it’s literally the case at Matta Café. Aura Matta’s family worked in Colombia’s coffee industry for decades, and began operating their own sustainability-focused farm 15 years ago in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, where their plants

grow at nearly 5,000 feet. Last May, Matta opened the brand’s first stateside café in Portland, Oregon’s Pearl District. “It was a sincere quest to share a part of my heritage with a new community that I knew would appreciate and embrace our rich Colombian coffee culture,” says Matta. Opened in collaboration with Daniel Maloney of Secret

Grove, the space operates as café by day and music-centric cocktail lounge by night, offering drinks like a cold brew twist on an Aperol Spritz. “Every cup of coffee we serve embodies our connection to our farm, offering a taste of Colombia that we hope will spark connections, foster community, and educate,” says Matta. —Penelope Bass



Shelby Moore



Max Reis

A canned Paloma with a QR code that launches a Galaga-style video game battle against celebrity tequila is just a taste of Max Reis' style as beverage director of Los Angeles restaurant Mirate. But what one may mistake for a gimmick is an invitation to learn. "I wanted a fun way to engage with a more serious aspect of our stance on agave spirits and buying practices," he explains. Behind his

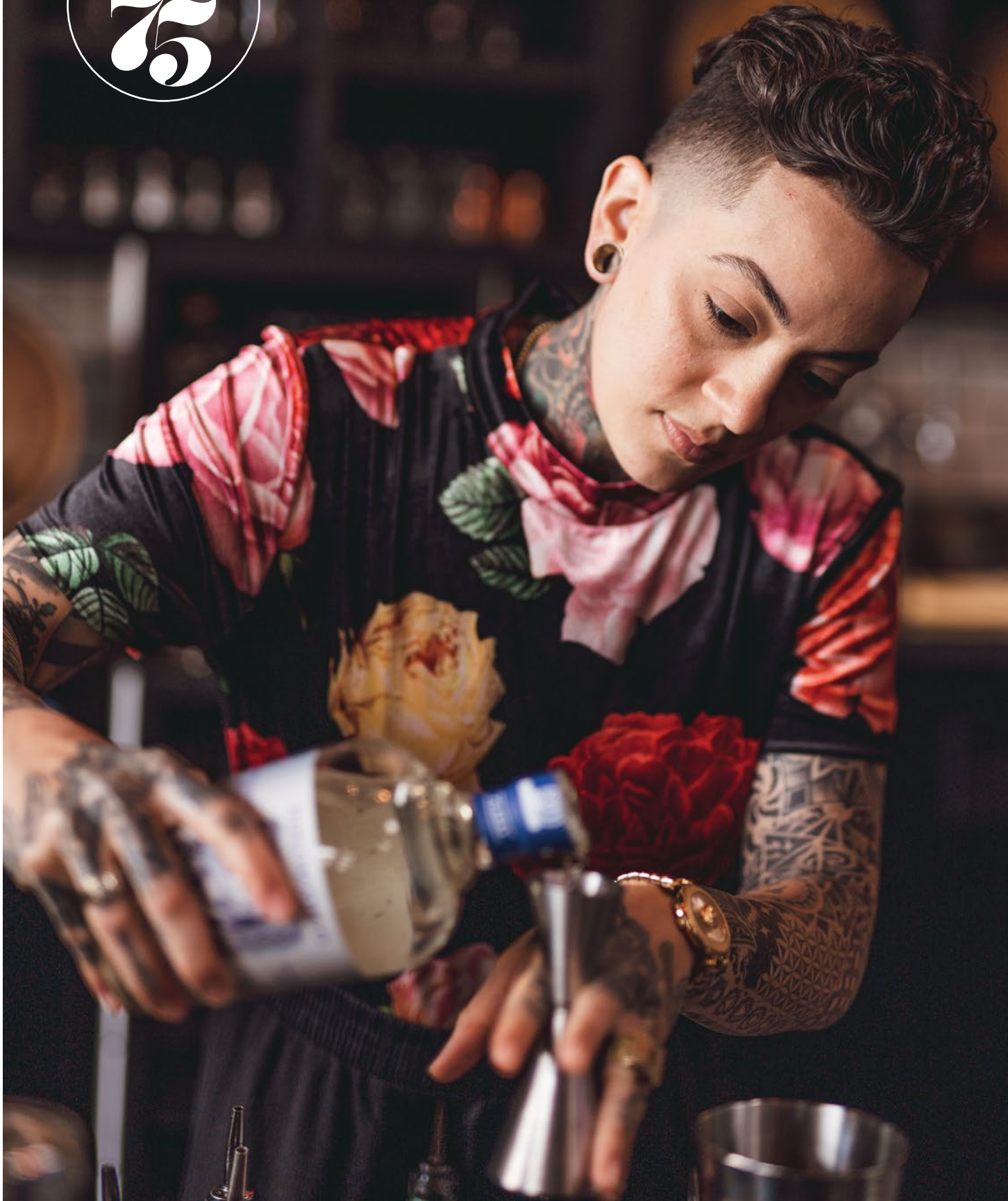
entertaining approach to cocktails and his constant smile is Reis' serious consideration for Mexican spirits producers as well as the environment. While those sitting at the bar may not recognize many of the bottles adorning the back wall, Reis views this as a teaching opportunity. Mirate only stocks small-batch Mexican-made spirits—agave, gin, whiskey, and rum—while the bartenders happily act as guides, sharing the bottles' stories,

sustainability efforts, and production methods. "The confines that many would consider an inconvenience are worth it because it gives us an ethical backbone that inspires us to push ourselves further, both ethically and creatively, to stay within those confines while simultaneously pushing the envelope," Reis says. This style of bartending, which still uses next-level techniques such as in a clarified Margarita and a stirred Ramos Gin

Fizz, earned the bar a spot on North America's 50 Best Bars list last year, and Reis the accolade of StarChefs' Rising Star Bartender. He hopes those in the industry will see this as an example of why one needn't stray from one's convictions to win big. "We utilize our wins to inspire us to keep going and growing, making our actions more and more deliberate ... hopefully inspiring those around us to do the same," Reis says. —Caroline Pardilla



Explore Max Reis' Mirate cocktail menu at imbibemagazine.com.





**Bad Birdy
at Kuduowl.**

Kuduowl

With more than a decade behind the bar and a talent for complex cocktail creation, the California bartender who goes by the moniker Bad Birdy could have opened a bar in any major city. But a deep affinity for her hometown of Downey, a suburb of LA, left no doubt for where she wanted to plant roots. "My aspiration has always been to create a remarkable bar in a small city, offering locals a hidden gem they can call their own," she says. Opened in a historic 1925 theater in July, Kuduowl offers its own performance art in the form of cocktails both elaborate and playful, from a balsam fir-infused Negroni to an off-menu bubble gum Daiquiri. "[Kuduowl] was the first to bring this new wave of mixology to Downey," says Bad Birdy. "LA encompasses more than just downtown; it embodies a vast tapestry of neighborhoods and communities. What better way to support our collective spirit than by broadening our reach to those around us?" —PB

Iván Saldaña

The man known as "Dr. Agave," Iván Saldaña, has built an empire of beloved spirits at Casa Lumbre: Ancho Reyes, Montelobos, and many more. Now he's branched into the alcohol-free space with Almave, developed at the request of Formula One driver Lewis Hamilton. "It allowed me and the team to imagine: Why not?" Saldaña says. "It brought a spark of inspiration

and a challenge." Like tequila, Almave is distilled from 100 percent blue agave. In fact, it's made in Jalisco, although parts of the process are quite different, including the absence of fermentation, and multiple pot distillations on the agave fibers. "That traps the entire spectrum of flavors from the agave," Saldaña says. "The burnt sugar and caramel elements from cooking it, but also the green, fresh notes from the fibers." After distillation, agave nectar, capsaicin, and other natural ingredients are added to round out the flavors, add texture, and make the liquid shelf stable. Although Almave has encountered skeptics, the reception among consumers and bartenders has been positive, which Saldaña attributes to the authenticity at its heart. Using the same base ingredient as tequila was important, although he's emphatic that Almave isn't just a substitute for traditional spirits. "We aren't mimicking anything," he says. "We're a distillate made out of blue agave that happens to have no alcohol." Most NA brands don't move beyond the functional imperative. But, Saldaña notes, "the beauty of non-alc is that it doesn't have to necessarily be a replacement of what already exists." On a personal level, Saldaña had to realign aspects of his identity in order to tackle the challenge of creating Almave, which he says has been rewarding. "I had to define myself differently," he says. "I was no longer a master distiller of alcohol, but someone who uses his craft to bring liquid flavor. I love the challenge of exploring other ways of being myself."

—Susannah Skiver Barton



Ransom Note

This grapefruit-forward gin sour was one of the first cocktails that Bad Birdy created. It can still be found under the "Memoirs" section of the Kuduowl cocktail menu.

1½ oz. Old Tom gin
1 oz. fresh lime juice
½ oz. grapefruit liqueur
½ oz. honey syrup (1:1)

Tools: shaker, strainer, fine strainer
Glassware: coupe
Garnish: grapefruit twist, cherry

Shake all of the ingredients with ice and double strain into a chilled glass. Express a grapefruit twist over the drink, then use the twist as a garnish along with a cherry.

**Bad Birdy
Kuduowl
Downey, California**

Lost Lantern Whiskey

Most tasting rooms feature spirits from a single distillery, but at Lost Lantern, visitors get the opportunity to try whiskey from all across the United States. That's because Lost Lantern is an independent bottler, offering mostly single barrels from dozens of distilleries. And in the Vergennes, Vermont, tasting room, visitors get their pick from the company's vast library, including long-sold-out releases. "We want it to be a place where people can come and explore whiskey in depth, however much they know about it already," says co-founder Adam Polonski, who, with his wife and business partner, Nora Ganley-Roper, devises the intimate tastings. Their goal is to foster discovery, even if that means a guest ends up disliking one of the pours. "If you're just coming into whiskey, we don't necessarily expect you to like all of these," Polonski says, explaining that they hope people will learn enough about their preferences to guide their next pour. Plus, they aim for visitors to come away with an appreciation for the diversity of craft whiskey, which in Lost Lantern's portfolio ranges from bourbon and rye to uniquely smoked American single malt and more. "If you come here," Polonski says, "there are some fun treats for you." —SSB

Press Club

Before opening their first bar together, Devin Kennedy and Will Patton were friends and occasional rivals. "We came up in the industry together, and we were in the same

cocktail competition circuit," says Kennedy, who previously worked at Pouring Ribbons in New York City. Last fall, the two joined forces with Press Club, a vibrant addition to Washington, D.C.'s historic Dupont Circle. Despite their innovative recipes—early



menus feature drinks made with yogurt-washed Michter's bourbon—Kennedy and Patton aim to appeal to passersby and cocktail nerds alike. "Hospitality comes first," says Patton, who is also beverage director for Hive Hospitality properties, like D.C.'s two-Michelin-starred Jônt. "We want to make some of the best cocktails in the world, but all of that is in service to the idea that, when you come in, we tune the entire experience so you have the best time." The menu is divided into two sections: Track List features à la carte drinks, while Play List is a seasonally driven tasting menu. All are inspired by vinyl records. "We take inspiration from certain albums and make cocktails that evoke the feelings you get if you listen to that music," says Kennedy. "We're really happy about what we're bringing to the city." —Emily Saladino

Lucky Cheetah

Opposite the storied cobblestone way of Portland, Maine's Wharf Street, a modest staircase leads to an unlikely subterranean world ensconced in cheetah carpeting, scarlet millwork, and Slim Aarons' high-society artwork. This is Lucky Cheetah, a fusion of Victorian-era Hong Kong dim sum houses and 1950s Monte Carlo grandeur, with a Champagne and dumpling

menu to match. "We wanted to create a space that felt opulent but also had a feeling of comfort," share owners Wills Dowd and Jared Dinsmore. The 10-seat bar, marked by a solid piece of pink Italian stone and black-and-white encaustic tile, flows into the open-format dining room where marble tables are set with coupes that await diners' selections from the curated Champagne list (Dom Pérignon, Laurent-Perrier La Cuvée, and Jacques Lorent among them). "Socially speaking, the celebratory nature of dim sum's communal table experience pairs perfectly with popping a bottle of Champagne to share," explain Dowd and Dinsmore, also noting the practical pairing of Champagne's high acidity to complement the savory, umami-rich cuisine. Besides bubbles, cocktails are crafted with Asian touches, including house-made shiso cordial, sesame-infused vodka, and lemongrass-infused tequila. "With neither of us being of Chinese origin, we didn't want to claim authenticity or a traditional dim sum experience—this establishment honors the experience, but is our version." —Jillian Dara

Bar Grale

Bourbon may be Louisville, Kentucky's calling card, but you won't know it at Holy Grale, the city's perpetually crowded de facto spot for beer. Now, owners Lori Beck and Tyler Trotter aim to do for Louisville's wine scene what they did for beer with the opening of Bar Grale Wine Bar and Bottle Shop. "Over the years, as we've traveled the world to immerse ourselves in beer culture, we started incorporating visits to notable wine regions,

which has been incredibly enriching," says Beck. Opened in May 2024, the spot offers a rotating selection of 16 wines by the glass (or a modest \$15 corkage fee on bottles from the shop), all of which beg to be consumed al fresco in the wine garden. Tuck away your pinkie; Bar Grale emulates the same vibe as its sibling establishment. "By removing the pretension often associated with wine, [we seek] to foster genuine connections and shared experiences," says Beck. —Shana Clarke

The Aladdin Sane

This intimate new cocktail bar tucked beneath the restored, century-old Book Tower in downtown Detroit takes its cues from Tokyo listening bars and the 1970s-era theatricality of rock star David Bowie. The Aladdin Sane, opened by hospitality group Method Co. last August, invites discerning imbibers to partake of the most extensive Japanese whisky list in the city, as well as rarities such as Glenfiddich 29-year Grand Yozakura (the only bottle in a Michigan bar). Japanese-inspired cocktails are crafted by Method Co. creative beverage director Jeremy Oertel and The Aladdin Sane's beverage director Patrick Jobst. Sip on the Sake & Strange Divine, a Martini-style sake-based drink with gin, rice whiskey, sushi rice, shiso, and garnished with caviar, or the cherrywood-smoked Negroni, Dreams & Reflections. "The journey is curated and personal," says Method Co. creative director Daniel Olsovsky. "[It's] a bespoke escape like no other." —CP

Bar manager Chris Allen at The Aladdin Sane in Detroit.

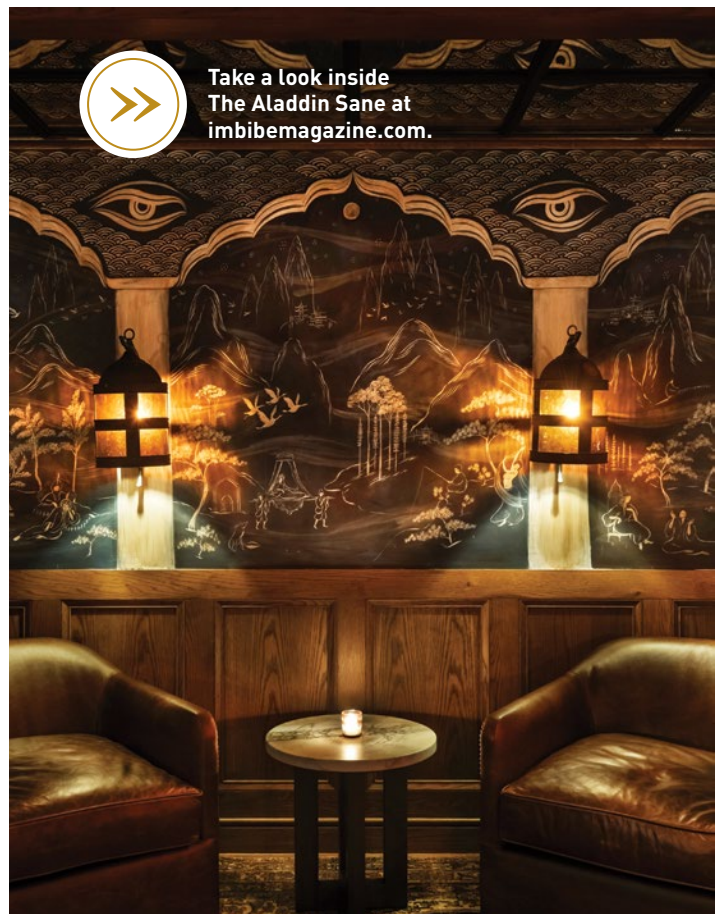




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Clockwise from top: Matthew Williams, Matthew Williams, Hayden Stinbaugh



Take a look inside
The Aladdin Sane at
imbibemagazine.com.

Sara Ahlgrim & Chad Perkins



As the birthplace of bourbon, Kentucky's also home to a lot of local fans. But bourbon knowledge doesn't come at conception, as Sara Ahlgrim realized 10 years ago while working marketing for OBC Kitchen in Lexington alongside Post Time Studios videographer Chad Perkins. "I'm from Kentucky, born and raised, but back then I don't think I could name 10 different bourbons," Ahlgrim says. "It was a point of pride as a Kentuckian to expand my bourbon knowledge, and Chad was going through the same thing with his bourbon exploratory phase." Working video shoots together led to tasting bourbon together, and before long, the boundaries blurred. In mid-2016, the duo launched their YouTube channel, It's Bourbon Night, joined two years later by their merchandise and lifestyle company, Whiskey Ambitions. (Bourbon also begat betrothal—Ahlgrim and Perkins wed in 2019.) Today, more than 110,000 subscribers follow the couple's videos as they taste new releases, conduct blind "flight fights" of similar whiskies, and go hunting for interesting bottles in liquor stores around the state. And while there's no shortage of online bourbon enthusiasts, journalists, or influencers these days pontificating about unicorn bottles and high-price-tag expressions, Ahlgrim and Perkins aim to keep their coverage more down to earth. "We want bourbon to be approachable. We don't want people to be intimidated to try bourbon because they see it as a gatekept interest," Ahlgrim says. "We're still on our own bourbon journeys, learning something new every day.



Chad Perkins

We're enthusiasts just like [the viewers], we're just recording our experiences while we're learning, then sharing it so they can learn something, too." —PC

Bar Mezzo

Inspired equally by midcentury Italian café culture and the elevated style and energy of the New York City cocktail scene,

all-day café and aperitivo bar Intermezzo in St. Petersburg, Florida, has a spunky new sibling. Owner Jarrett Sabatini wanted to lean into the latter vibe, and turn up the dial. "We have done both at Intermezzo over the years, but the nighttime side of the concept has really grown," says Sabatini, who opened the bar in 2016 when he was just 23 years old. "It's something I wanted to give

its own life to—that's Bar Mezzo." With a craft-driven menu, the cocktails get playful with classic builds, like a Margarita featuring fresh-pressed green juice, as well as more technique-driven mixology. "Bar Mezzo is where locals can gather for great cocktails in a moody, refined space," says Sabatini. "No gimmicks—just great drinks, energy, and music." —PB



Justin Donais



Christine Walter

Christine Walter is a fifth-generation farmer at Bauman's Farm & Garden, which her family homesteaded in Gervais, Oregon, in 1895. Over the decades, Bauman's expanded to include baked goods, a garden center, and canned goods. "We're always looking for ways to make the family farm sustainable," says Walter, who grew up pressing apple juice. Turning farmstead apples into cider seemed like another value add. "They were like, 'That will never work. It's just a fad,'" Walter says. She

disagreed. Nine years ago, Walter began making cider in a family barn, finding a calling in co-fermenting apples with fruits she grew up eating, such as peaches, pears, and loganberries. "I was making really approachable, farm-fresh flavors," Walter says. Her tenacious hobby became Bauman's Cider, one of the Pacific Northwest's ascendant cideries. At last year's Northwest Cider Cup, Walter's ciders won seven medals, including best of show for its rosé-like Mountain Rose that's made with red-fleshed Oregon apples. "It's expressive

and wonderful, and we just love it," Walter says. Cider making brought Walter back into the family business. She left the farm for college and then Texas, where she married and had two daughters, before moving to Portland, Oregon, and becoming a massage therapist, later earning a college degree in biochemistry. The skill set helps her fine-tune blends and approaches, be it the company's best-selling Loganberry Cider that tastes like "a berry Jolly Rancher," Walter says, or the sparkling Pét Mac, a single-varietal

McIntosh apple cider inspired by natural wine. Last year, the cidery took over a former location of Portland's Ecliptic Brewing and converted it into Bauman's on Oak. The production facility and restaurant serves as a showcase for cider's food-pairing potential, featuring the likes of crab rolls with miso mayonnaise, roasted beets, and nettle salsa, and house-baked sourdough bread with caramelized onion butter. "We're trying to shift the perception of cider in such a beautiful way," Walter says. —Joshua M. Bernstein



Right Now

Bitter and bright, this simple Sour gets a subtle vegetal note from cucumber and a savory rim.

1 oz. blanco tequila
1 oz. Cynar
¾ oz. fresh lemon juice
¾ oz. simple syrup (1:1)
2-3 cucumber slices

Tools: shaker, strainer
Glass: Nick & Nora
Garnish: artichoke salt (optional)

Rim a chilled glass with artichoke salt (or regular salt) and set aside. Add all of the cocktail ingredients to a shaker with ice. Shake well to break down the cucumber, then strain into the prepared glass.

Artichoke Salt: In a food processor or Robot-Coupe, pulverize 3 parts dehydrated artichokes to a fine powder, add 1 part kosher salt, and blend until combined.

Nick Flower and Adam Robinson
Too Soon
Portland, Oregon

Kate Gerwin

Kate Gerwin, by her own admission, can't stand still. When she's not running her award-winning bar-cum-distillery, Albuquerque's Happy Accidents, she's on the road doing pop-ups and filming her new television series, teaching, designing glassware for European brand Onis, and championing greater equity for bar professionals. Gerwin's newest project? Expanding her distillery concept to a 50,000-square-foot space near the airport. Under the Happy Accidents name, the in-the-works facility will include a bar housed inside of a fuselage, with plans to host pop-ups from some of the world's most acclaimed bars. "You take off in Albuquerque, and land in another place entirely," she says. Expanding on the distillery concept, Gerwin and her team will have the resources to continue to develop complex, wholly original flavor profiles in their cocktails, some of which might soon be available in a ready-to-drink format courtesy of the facility's commercial canning line. "Guests kept asking for canned versions," says Gerwin. "And, when our collaborators' pop-ups end, their cocktails will also become RTDs, and their bars will receive partial proceeds from sales." Canning drinks is a science. "All of the ingredients need to be stabilized and as clear as possible to retain flavor," she says. "It's been a huge learning curve, but we have a solid 10 to 15 drinks that are bangers." To wit: Hey Love, a beguiling blend of coconut, lychee, sparkling sake, and gin. The distillery model also allows for greater control over revenue,

enabling Gerwin to pay her team well above minimum wage, provide full benefits, and offer profit sharing. *Free Spirit* is Gerwin's other passion project; the Very Local streaming series explores cocktail culture in locales like Birmingham and New Orleans, where a recent episode highlighted vanishing Black-owned bars and the effect on the community. "My plate is pretty full right now, but I can't stop," says Gerwin. "The industry chose me; this is where I belong."
—Laurel Miller

Too Soon

Combining the talents of two of Portland, Oregon's bar industry vets, the cocktail bar Too Soon offers a menu both tightly honed and nearly infinite. Nick Flower, formerly of Teardrop Lounge and NYC spots like Little Branch, tapped Adam Robinson (Deadshot) to join him on the project, opened last January. "Adam has a great culinary approach to cocktails that has shaped our menu," says Flower. "He's so creative, with such an amazing palate." The house signatures include drinks such as the Right Now (tequila, Cynar, lemon, cucumber) and a range of highballs like Melon & Pandan or Celery & Shiso. For his part, Flower leans hard into the "bartender's choice" approach, with a Rolodex of cocktails 1,000-deep. "Maybe it sounds cheesy, but when I go to a bar, I want to feel seen. I want to feel heard," says Flower. "And if a bartender nails your bartender's choice, you feel heard." —PB

Nick Flower at
Too Soon in
Portland, Oregon.





Photos this spread: Seth Marquez

Artur and Iryna Yuzvik



What might have been a dream deferred for Artur and Iryna Yuzvik became a longtime goal realized sooner than expected. The husband and wife founded Soloway Roastery in their hometown of Ternopil, in western Ukraine, in 2016. They soon opened two cafés—among the first to introduce specialty coffee to the city. Having received his education in Connecticut, Artur knew he wanted to return to the U.S. to open a coffee shop. But the Russian invasion of Ukraine altered their timeline. “On the day the full-scale invasion began, we were returning from vacation and landed in NYC,” explains Artur. All flights to Ukraine were indefinitely canceled. Meanwhile, Iryna was five months pregnant with their first child. “Instead of postponing our dream, we decided to find the perfect city to make it a reality,” says Artur. After exploring New York, the couple visited Chicago and knew it was the right fit. Just under two years after that canceled flight, Artur and Iryna opened Soloway Coffee in Chicago’s Lincoln Park neighborhood. The chic-yet-cozy corner café features coffees exclusively from their roastery in Ukraine—sourced from origins like Ethiopia, Colombia, and Honduras—and serves everything from pour overs to specialty



Kateryna Kaushan

drinks like a miso-rosemary latte. Relying on a strong team to manage operations in Ukraine, the Yuzviks are planning on a

third shop in Ukraine, as well as a new stateside project, with details still under wraps. “Our goal at Soloway is to encourage

people to slow down and connect,” says Artur. “We want to build a strong community around our business.” —PB



Heather Daentz



Adrian Manspeaker

The sole proprietor of Joseph Jewell Winery, Adrian Manspeaker lives and makes wine in Sonoma County, where, he admits, there's plenty of great fruit for purchase. Still, for 40 percent of his grapes, he drives three hours north to Humboldt County, a place better known for cannabis, where there are more than 50 wineries but only 150 acres of vines. "A lot of wineries here source fruit from Napa, Sonoma, and Mendocino," he observes. "There's an impression that the farming is too time-consuming here. It's secluded; the ground is

rugged and steep; there's a ton of timberland, not rolling hills; and finding even a 4- or 5-acre parcel is hard." Birds, deer, bears, ornery locals, bad weather, smoke taint—Manspeaker has dealt with it all on the 6 acres he co-farms. The other vineyards he sources from haven't fared better. With few takers, they're practically giving fruit away for the hassle of growing it. So why does Manspeaker bother? "If I wasn't born and raised here, I wouldn't," he says. When he started making wine in 2006, competition was too fierce for Sonoma fruit. "That led me back to Humboldt," he says.

Marine fog layer, coastal redwoods—he knew its promise. "We have much shorter days, maximum temperatures are 80 to 82, and nighttime temperatures drop, so we see less sugar, higher natural acidity, and good hang time." That's a plus for phenolic ripeness. "There's more complexity and balance in the wines. The quality over-delivers on the price." That matters to a winemaker with Manspeaker's aspirations. Humboldt remains insulated "behind the Redwood Curtain," as he says, most wineries selling only locally, but Manspeaker is a Sonoma

resident; he's oriented toward the wider wine world. He has a PR firm and national distribution, and in that, "he and his wines are amazing ambassadors for Humboldt County, and putting us on the Northern California wine trail," says Julie Benbow, executive director of the Humboldt County Visitors Bureau. "I want to see the area successful," says Manspeaker. Still, he's ambivalent. If his vibrant Humboldt wines pique other grape buyers' interest? "I don't know if I want that to happen because then I have competition."

—Betsy Andrews

Elizabeth Higley

A little conviction can go a long way—that is, when it's parlayed into action. With plenty of both, North Carolina-based winemaker Elizabeth Higley is helping working-class women access practical wine education. In the fall of 2023, Higley launched a scholarship for female students of viticulture and enology at her alma mater, Surry Community College, located in the promising wine region of Yadkin Valley, North Carolina. "I'm a big proponent of hands-on technical programs that get people trained and prepared for the workforce affordably," says Higley. At New York Maritime Academy, Higley studied business and marine transportation in a Coast Guard license program. Working with the U.S. Merchant Marines, she traveled to ports around the world, encountering a range of cultures and wines. With a newfound love of wine, Higley pursued a viticulture and oenology degree at SCC, then honed her expertise by working at nearby Windsor Run Cellars. Experimentation in her employer's cellar yielded Higley's first independently made wine, an Albariño. With funds from bottle sales, she created a scholarship. "Coming from one extremely male-dominated field to another," Higley says, "I wanted to help create an opportunity for more women to be supported." According to Sarah Bowman, viticulture instructor at SCC, the number of women in the

school's wine program has risen from "a handful" of female students in classes to more than 90 percent online and 50 percent in-person. "Juggling work and family responsibilities can present challenges for all of our students," says Bowman, "but, in particular, childcare responsibilities or caring for a family member seem to disproportionately impact our female students." Higley's scholarship aims to help bridge this gap, and her new label, Demarcation Wine Co., launching this year, will continue to support the program.—Amy Bess Cook



Asha Loupy

Vanilla beans, green cardamom, and hibiscus. When asked which ingredients belong in every home bar, this is Asha Loupy's response. "These three spices cover sweet, fragrant, and tart, which are flavor profiles that are beautiful in drinks of all kinds," explains Loupy, an Oakland-based recipe developer. If you only reach for the spice rack when cooking or baking, Loupy is here to change that. "The easiest way to start incorporating spices into beverages is using them to infuse simple syrups," she advises. "You can graduate to making spice-infused shrubs and then even play with making your own tinctures, like homemade bitters." Loupy's passion for recipe development began as a child and eventually led to the creation of her blog, From Head to Table, in 2013. But it was in February 2020,

when Loupy was hired as the recipe editor for Diaspora Co., that the unique qualities of her culinary approach bloomed like spices in hot oil. Working with the woman-owned, queer-led company—which sources heirloom, single-origin spices directly from farmers—Loupy learned about the social and environmental impacts of our international spice supply chain, as well as the correlation between time and taste. "The flavor of a spice comes from its essential oils, and the oil content deteriorates over time," she says. The fresher the spice, the more flavorful the outcome of any dish or drink. This is the foundation of the forthcoming Diaspora Co. cookbook, which Loupy co-authored with founder Sana Javeri Kadri and is scheduled for publication in October. It includes an "epically sippable drinks chapter" that builds on Loupy's repertoire of recipes published in two editions of *The Diaspora Drinklet*, a drinks-only cookbook that is small in size, but big in flavor, and covers the full beverage spectrum from morning to night, steamy to icy, alcohol-free to boozy.—Elena Valeriote

Amanda Victoria

In 2019, Amanda Victoria was pregnant with her first child and living in an apartment in lower Manhattan when she and her partner, Joseph Mintz, decided to start a drinks business. In February 2020, right before their lives and the entire world changed, they debuted Siponey Spritz Co., the first B Corp-certified canned cocktail company. Making additive-

free, ready-to-drink spritzes, Siponey also participates in 1% for the Planet and supports organizations like Detroit Hives, Corporate Pero Latinos, and Cristian Rivera Foundation. Social responsibility and ecological sustainability are key not only to Siponey's brand identity, but to who she is as a person, says Victoria, the company's CEO. "For me, it's always been: Who makes it, how do they make it, and what is it being made with? That hasn't always been the trend." In 2024, she ran for New York State Assembly; currently, she serves on the board of Corporate Pero Latinos and Focus on Health. A former brand ambassador for Rémy Cointreau, William Grant & Sons, Bacardi, and Moët Hennessy, Victoria cut her teeth as a cocktail server and bartender in such storied New York City destinations as PDT, Dutch Kills, and the now-shuttered Pegu Club. She's pleased to see the cocktail industry evolve to incorporate more voices and perspectives, including the rise of thoughtfully made nonalcoholic drinks. "It's a more inclusive experience," she says. "There's no judgment whether someone is drinking alcohol or not, and that's important when we talk about hospitality and making people feel welcome." In 2024, Siponey launched its first fleet of alcohol-free canned spritzes. "I wanted to create something that gives consumers more choices," Victoria says. "With the crack of a can, you can have a beautiful nonalcoholic cocktail, or you can utilize it as a mixer. There are options for everyone." —ES



Tune in to *Radio Imbibe* starting January 7 to hear the full interview with rocket scientist and moonshine distiller Dr. Howard Conyers. imbibemagazine.com/podcast



Howard Conyers

In his career as an aerospace engineer for NASA, Dr. Howard Conyers aimed for the stars. But his other projects—including being a barbecue pit master and host of *Nourish* for PBS, and founder and distiller at Backyard Distillery in his native Manning, South Carolina—have had a more terrestrial focus. The throughline in these other projects is his dedication to Black culinary history, and the roles comestibles like barbecue and moonshine have played in Black and Southern culture. “Moonshine was such a part of our culture in the American South—it helped save a lot of farming families and farming communities during the Great Depression and Prohibition,” he says. “It has a deep cultural and community feel, too. And the science and the engineering [of distilling] is very much appealing to me.” —PC



Photos this spread: Greta Rybus



LyAnna Sanabria
at Papi Portland.

LyAnna Sanabria

LyAnna Sanabria created a unique mentoring opportunity in an unlikely place. “I want to create a sheer annihilation of perception,” says Sanabria, co-founder and beverage director of the Puerto Rican bar and restaurant Papi Portland in Portland, Maine. “But I want to do so in a pleasant way.” Sanabria’s plans for genteel destruction within the hospitality industry extend well past city borders. Soon after Papi’s opening in March 2023, Puerto Rican bartenders began making pilgrimages to Portland, the largest city in statistically the country’s whitest state. These sojourns became inquiries for jobs during the city’s summer tourist season. Sanabria quickly transformed these requests for seasonal slots into a mentoring program. Unofficially dubbed TiTi as a play on the Spanish word for “auntie,” the seasonal program focuses on giving active Puerto Rican, Caribbean, and Latino bartenders the chance to upskill their abilities within Papi’s high-volume environment rather than building new bartenders from the ground up. Sanabria also intends to use the still-evolving program to promote greater inclusivity within the bar community, a desire stemming from her experience as a fledgling bartender in San Francisco. “The scene’s vibe from what I perceived to be the ‘Jerry Thomas’ crew back then was that not all were invited,” she says. “I don’t want that here. Inviting everyone to your bar doesn’t just mean the guests in front of you.” Sanabria’s work caught the attention

of Imbibe 75 alumnus Touré Folkes, whose New Orleans-based organization Turning Tables provides hospitality education and training for underrepresented populations. They’ve worked on a few collaborations together, including an ambitious project in which Turning Tables alums head to Papi for what Sanabria dubs “graduate school” before striking out on their own. “Working with Touré has been cosmic,” she says. “I didn’t think that working together would be possible, but after talking to him, everything felt so organic and natural. I guess it just shows that you shouldn’t be afraid to shoot your shot.” —*Rich Manning*

Clemente Bar

An homage to artist Francesco Clemente, the Clemente Bar marks a new direction for fine-dining destination Eleven Madison Park, above which the bar is located. “We’re seeing our audience be a little younger and more adventurous now, so we’re trying to make the space more accessible,” says beverage director Sebastian Tollius. Opened in October, Clemente is first and foremost a cocktail bar anchored by a 16-drink menu of originals created by Tollius and bar manager Richie Millwater. Aesthetic works of art in their own right, the cocktails also lean playful and nostalgic, like a clarified mash-up of a Negroni and a Piña Colada, and a whiskey cocktail that evokes the flavor of a Samoa, the familiar Girl Scout cookie. “There are very few bars around the world that are also named after the artist and have permanent installations of their art—you have Bemelmans and Scarfes Bar—so to create a space like that in New York feels timeless,” says Tollius. —*PB*



The Scotch y Coco Chanel

With a surprisingly complementary combo of scotch and coconut water, this highball gets added complexity from amontillado sherry and a strong tea syrup.

1½ oz. blended Scotch whisky
½ oz. amontillado sherry
½ oz. tea syrup
½ oz. fresh lemon juice
chilled coconut water, to top

Tools: bar spoon
Glass: highball
Garnish: lemon twist

Add the first 4 ingredient to a glass, add ice, top with coconut water (Sanabria prefers versions with pulp), and stir. Garnish.

Tea Syrup: Using either chamomile or Earl Grey tea, add 8 teabags and 8 oz. of boiling water to a pot and steep for 30 minutes. (An intensely strong brew is desired.) Remove the teabags, squeezing out the liquid, then stir in 1 cup of granulated sugar. Cool, bottle, and refrigerate for up to 1 week.

LyAnna Sanabria
Papi Portland
Portland, Maine

Zahra Tabatabai

If you spot a dented gray Toyota Prius slaloming through New York City's streets and stopping near fine-dining restaurants, chances are good that you found Back Home Beer founder Zahra Tabatabai hand delivering her Sumac Gose, salt-laced Persian Blue, and other Middle Eastern-inspired beers that draw on her Iranian heritage and delight restaurateurs. "It's beyond what I could have imagined," Tabatabai says. She founded Back Home in 2021 to honor and follow in the footsteps of her grandfather, who brewed beer in Shiraz, Iran, the "back home" that her family left in 1978, one year before the Iranian Revolution forbid alcohol production and consumption. Tabatabai, who lives in Brooklyn with her son, experimented with ingredients common to Persian cooking, including pomegranates, orange blossoms, and blue salt. She worked with Staten Island's Flagship Brewing to produce cans and kegs, finding early placements at the Jean-Georges family of restaurants, including ABC Cocina and Kitchen. "When I was developing the recipes, it was very important for the beer to go with any type of food," Tabatabai says, adding that restaurants account for around 90 percent of her business. This year, Tabatabai is simultaneously seeking a permanent Back Home location and ramping up production at contract-brewing partners. "I couldn't wait to have a space to have more beer," she says. Increasing volume



Eric Medsker

will let Tabatabai remove restaurants from her wait list, stop rationing beer, and expand distribution around the Southeast and the Washington, D.C., region, where the beer is

served at the Michelin-starred restaurants Albi and Maydan. This year, Tabatabai will collaborate with chefs on beers centered on their notions of back home, a ferment built from

nostalgia, family traditions, and culinary food ways. The approach is both singular and universal. "Back home means something different to every single person," she says. —JMB



Marissa Feldman

Nice Coffee Roasters

With an eponymous mission and a virtually un-Googleable name, Nice Coffee Roasters wants to be just that—nice. Co-founded by Elliott Lau and Doug Meils, Nice combines their decades of cumulative industry experience at spots like Intelligentsia, Counter Culture, and Handsome Coffee Roasters, where the duo crossed paths. It's experience that provides them with "authenticity and enough industry trauma to make different business decisions from the generation before us," says Lau, who initially helped open the Nice Coffee shop in Downtown LA in 2017.

Roasting began quietly in 2023, and the operation officially launched in spring 2024. "We're nimble enough to buy smaller lots of coffees that our importers are excited about and we wouldn't be able to find ourselves," Lau says. Moving into 2025, Nice plans to expand wholesale operations and open a second coffee shop as they further their mission to "Be nice. Drink nice." —PB

Kills Boro Brewery

Drinking and dining on Staten Island is a difficult sell for New Yorkers, who often view the fifth borough as a bridge—and boat ride—too far to cross. But here's

a compelling reason to ride the Staten Island Ferry to happy hour: This winter, Kills Boro Brewing is opening its long-awaited taproom and restaurant that pairs patiently aged Continental lagers and pilsners with house-made pastas and thin, crispy pizzas powered by an in-house sourdough program. "We considered calling our taproom the Gluten House," says partner Sean Torres. In 2019, Kills Boro purchased its building, formerly a car showroom and citronella candle factory, and intended to build a beer-only taproom to complement brewing production. Post-pandemic, brewing great beer was no longer a big enough draw. "Quality is



Nice Coffee Roasters founders Elliott Lau (left) and Doug Meils.

getting your foot in the door, and then everything else is just trying to stay above the noise, and consumers have grown to appreciate experience and hospitality," Torres says. The taproom, which includes a sun-splashed glass atrium, will offer wine, cocktails, and an unbeatable location. Kills Boro is located beside the Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden, one of Staten Island's civic jewels. Stroll the grounds before, or after, pint and pies. There's always another boat to catch. —JMB





Mellotone Beer Project. Bottom left: Alexandra Nowell.

Mellotone Beer Project

Too often at brewery taprooms, the service can be as cold as the beer. “Many breweries tend to overlook the comfort and experience of people coming to visit their space,” says Alexandra Nowell, who sees hospitality as a key ingredient of Mellotone Beer Project in Cincinnati, Ohio. Mellotone opened last fall inside an historic 1850 church with soaring 46-foot ceilings and arched windows, brightening the dark-wood vibe favored by the previous tenant, Taft’s Ale House. The brewery is carved into a trio of distinct spaces that include a bar and music venue, a restaurant with a scratch kitchen serving smash burgers and bacon-wrapped LA-style danger dogs, and a plant-filled mezzanine with pool tables and communal seating. “Our concept needs to bring joy to everyone,” says Nowell, the founding brewmaster at Three Weavers Brewing in Inglewood, California. She left in 2021 and moved the next year to be closer to her family in northern Kentucky, across the Ohio River from Cincinnati, and partnered with Rhinegeist Brewery veteran Dennis Kramer-Wine to develop Mellotone, which is named after a Duke Ellington song. Nowell’s approachable, accessible beers include “what hopefully becomes Cincinnati’s favorite West Coast IPA,” she says, bringing a touch of California to southwest Ohio. “I’m looking forward to rooting Mellotone in Cincinnati.” —*JMB*

Ben and Tim Jordan

In Virginia winemaking nowadays, all roads lead to Ben and Tim Jordan. The Shenandoah Valley natives are co-founders, with sommelier Lee Campbell and financier Patt Eagan, of the two-year-old Common Wealth Crush, a custom crush and incubator, where they’re helping upstart winemakers produce maverick bottles: Jahdé Marley’s pét-nat infused with foraged pawpaws; Darwin Oniyx Acosta’s pine-infused white. In the land of Bordeaux-inspired Meritage, the Jordans’ approach—using sustainable farming and natural winemaking on hybrids, native grapes, and unusual vinifera—explodes the traditional paradigm. “When I returned to Virginia in 2012, like most of the U.S., it was a uniform, classical landscape trying to be like other places. Folks were figuring out how to grow grapes here, so it makes sense they were looking to other models. But it also makes sense that younger people were like, ‘Are there other ways to do things?’ ” says Ben, who worked in Sonoma before overseeing winemaking at Virginia’s Early Mountain Vineyards. There, he co-founded Lightwell Survey, concentrating on innovative blends, and Midland Wines with his brothers Tim and Gray on the family estate, where bottlings include a grape-and-crab-apple co-ferment. Tim co-founded the natural label Star Party, making iconoclastic wines from grapes like Saperavi and the hybrid Chardonel. In his viticultural business, he helps Virginia landowners transition to climate-friendly vineyards.

“Traditional vinifera needs 10 to 20 sprays,” he says. “With hybrids, I can do a single application around bloom.” Now Ben is working with Emily Hodson of Veritas Vineyards to manage a collaboration between the Virginia Winemaker’s Research Exchange, the Virginia Wine Board, and USDA to develop new disease-resistant multi-vitis (hybrid) varieties bred for Virginia’s varied terroir and humid subtropical conditions. That’s just one lasting effect the Jordans are having. With Common Wealth Crush, the brothers are mentoring the next generation. “There’s a groundswell of energy from newer producers. The more we communicate with each other, it starts to be a ‘taste the rainbow’ moment, pulling out flavors and experiences with wine we would never have had five years ago,” says Tim. “We have the diversity and the landscape here to do what we want.” —*BA*

Josh Durr

Josh Durr did his time behind bars, mixing Manhattans and shaking Gimlets as part of the Louisville, Kentucky cohort who helped build that city’s cocktail culture in the early years of the millennium. Today, Durr occupies an odd position in the bar world—increasingly ubiquitous, but almost invisible. In a way, that’s how he wants it. Durr is the founder and creative director of Hawthorn Innovations, a company that started as a cocktail consulting business out of his apartment, and that’s grown into a design

and creative agency for bars and spirits brands around the world. (A consumer-oriented website is on the to-do list for 2025.) The work for a particular client may start with crafting a cocktail, but it’ll extend far beyond—to designing



and fabricating tools and glassware, crafting the mobile cart for the drink’s ritual preparation, and every other aspect of the bar’s presentation.

“You can see us all over the world,” Durr says. “You may be at the Ritz Carlton Yacht Club, we have build-outs on all of those for The Macallan. You may be in front of an NFL stadium and see one of the advertisements we do for Diageo. You may be in any of the top hotels or restaurant groups in the world and see a cool drink presentation, ritual, or garnish—we probably designed it, created it, or supply it.” Nondisclosure agreements keep many of the details in the shadows, but one aspect Durr’s happy to highlight: He continues to keep things local to Louisville, with hopes to move from the current 30,000 square feet (plus a 7,000-square-foot woodshop that builds bar carts, smoking boxes, and other devices) into a 70,000-square-foot facility this year. “I never thought when I was a bar consultant that we’d have a huge building and all these creative folks coming together, and it’s been a lot of fun,” Durr says. “We just got recognized as one of the fastest-growing companies in the country. It’s been a wild ride.” —*PC*

Wesley Keegan

Healthcare coverage is hard to come by in the brewing industry, where employee benefits might be nothing more than a free post-shift beer. But in 2022, TailGate Brewery founder and owner Wesley Keegan began offering total healthcare coverage to every employee in his fast-growing chain of Tennessee brewpubs and taprooms. "Paying people well and offering 100-percent healthcare is important to me personally, and it's part of our aim to run a great business, which helps us accelerate," says Keegan, who has around 240 employees spread across nine locations. TailGate took a slow road to success. Keegan founded the brewery in San Diego in 2007 while attending San Diego State University, contract-brewing approachable beers like a blonde ale and hefeweizen. In 2014, he relocated the headquarters to Nashville, then a fledgling beer market, to open his first brewery inside a former Moose Lodge. He installed a three-barrel system to produce small-batch beers and considered serving BBQ, before settling on a wide-open niche. "Nashville was a growing food town, but there was next to zero pizza and beer," he says. The pizzas break the pepperoni mold, including toppings like birria and Nashville hot chicken, while the brewery's best-selling orange wheat ale is complemented by classic lagers, wild ales, cider, hard seltzer, and nonalcoholic teas. "Our goal in our taprooms is to make it so that you can

stay," Keegan says. "We want to offer something for everybody, and we want to eliminate your reason for saying no and leaving." Last year, TailGate underwent an expansion to double production, and Keegan is keeping his eyes open to opportunities to increase TailGate's taproom presence in Tennessee. The beer industry is facing headwinds, but Keegan is bullish on the future. "If you're listening to people and running a good business, you're going to continue to grow," he says. —JMB



Left Hand Brewing

Eric Wallace is well-versed in navigating a beer-industry shakeout. He co-founded Left Hand in Longmont, Colorado, in 1993, and watched as the late-1990s brought contractions and closures. In 1998, Left Hand merged with Denver's Tabernash Brewing, creating a resilient company that thrived for decades. Breweries today are again facing slumping sales, increased competition, and excess capacity. "You can hope that everything's going to turn around in the next few months, or you can assume that it will take a while to find a new normal," says Wallace, the CEO. To ride the rocky wave, Left Hand is selling brewery shares to the public, à la the Green Bay Packers' community ownership model, and building a platform to consolidate and streamline production, packaging, and distribution. Left Hand owns its property, has access to ample and inexpensive electricity and water, and employs an

award-winning brewing team capable of packaging beer, soda, hard kombucha, nonalcoholic seltzer, and other beverages in bottles or cans. Be it contract brewing or a more intertwined business relationship, the goal is to let breweries "remain independent, as opposed to going out of business or selling to multinational companies," Wallace says. "If you create mutually beneficial, fair, and balanced deals, they tend to last." —JMB

Crooked Hammock Brewery

Kids are central to craft brewing's long-simmering debate: Do they belong in taprooms? At Crooked Hammock, which operates a trio of brewpubs around coastal Delaware and South Carolina, the answer is an unequivocal yes. Crooked Hammock's locations contain sprawling backyards filled with playground equipment, decommissioned cars, Ping-Pong tables, and yard games. "People will walk in and tell me, 'We're here because my kids wanted to come,'" says Rich Garrahan, a father of four who founded the first location in Lewes, Delaware, in 2015. Crooked Hammock's menus aim to please all. Adults can pair chimichurri steak and lager-infused chicken with South to Somewhere, a coconut-flavored golden ale, while kids grab corn dogs and "party drinks" like a Cherry Bomb (grenadine, fresh-squeezed lemonade, cherries). "We're a meeting spot for families," Garrahan says. The brewery is building two new outdoor-focused locations over the next 18 months. Next fall will

bring an outpost in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, featuring towering oak trees in the backyards, while Crooked Hammock will land in Raleigh, North Carolina, in spring 2026. Each Crooked Hammock has a brewing system to tailor beer to local communities, but the commonality is hospitality for everyone. "Beer drinkers love us," Garrahan says. "But you know what? Kids really like us, too." —JMB

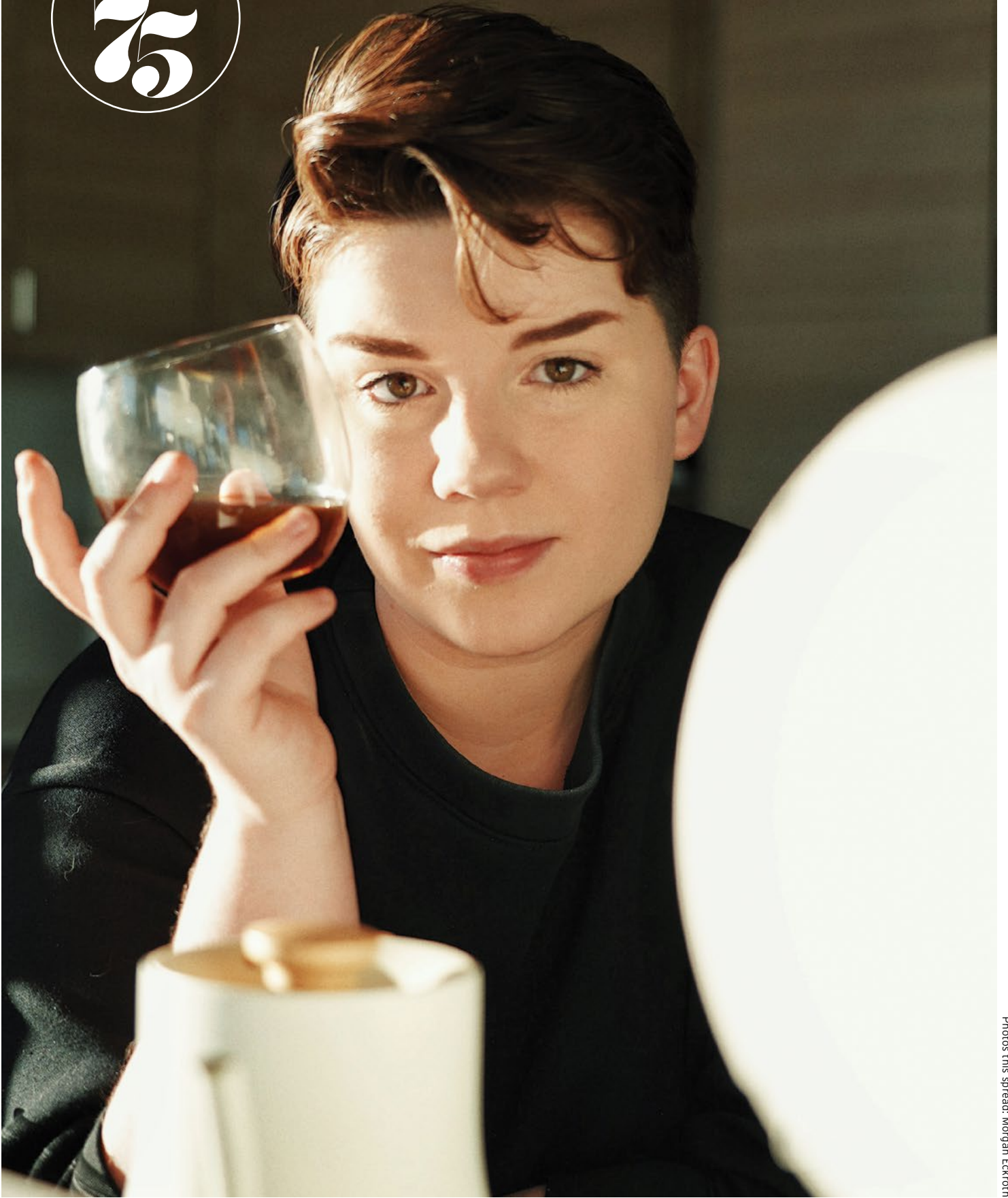
Bardo

Proof that quality tea doesn't have to be self-serious, Bardo prioritized inclusivity when it opened its first brick-and-mortar tea house in Portland, Oregon's Killingsworth neighborhood last February. "We make sure to honor the culture and the history and the craft of tea, but we're also really trying to make it an accessible beverage for people—no matter where they're coming from," says Ravi Kroesen, Bardo's co-owner and former head tea maker and vice president of Smith Teamaker. In addition to selecting an array of carefully sourced tea ware and global teas, some of which have already become favorites of area chefs and bartenders like Jim Meehan, Kroesen hosts hour-long tasting sessions. Co-owner Veronika Vogler, a meditation teacher and art world alum, leads weekly silent tea meditations. "It's a nice way for people to sit in community and learn about tea on their own," Vogler says. "We're trying to bring a sense of fun and sophistication to tea." —ES

Bardo Tea in Portland, Oregon. Co-owners Veronika Vogler and Ravi Kroesen, bottom left.







Photos this spread: Morgan Eckroth



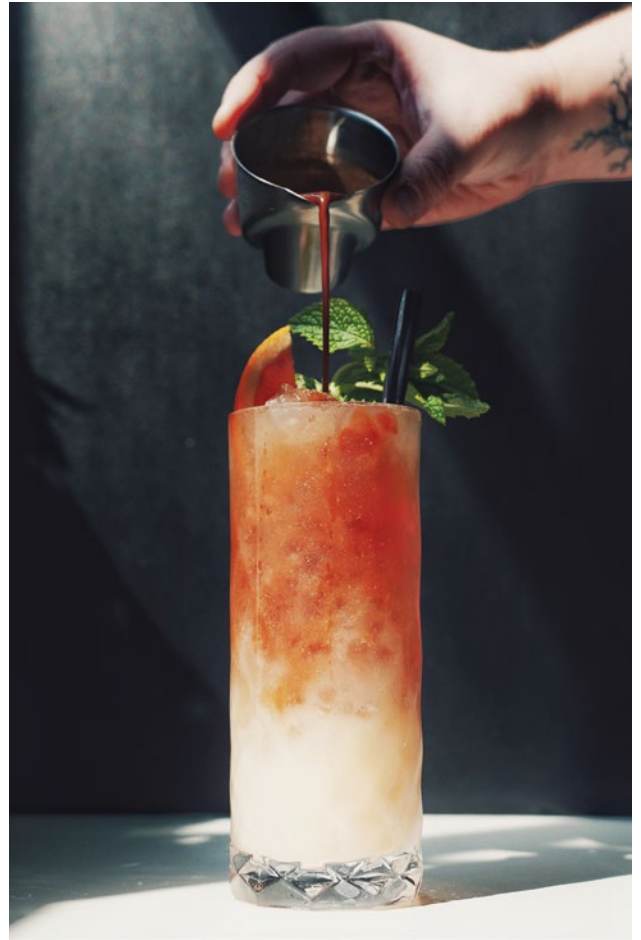
Morgan Eckroth

When most of the world's coffee shops shut down in 2020, Portland, Oregon-based barista Morgan Eckroth saw an opportunity to keep café culture alive online. Posting elegant drink recipes and heartwarming barista videos under the handle MorganDrinksCoffee, Eckroth has quickly become Gen Z's favorite internet barista, with a following of more than 6 million on TikTok alone. But before becoming a social media sensation, Eckroth was just another college student working at a café between classes. After about a year behind the coffee counter, Eckroth decided to deepen their skill set by signing up for the United States Barista Championship. "I had the very-exciting-but-scary realization that I didn't ever want to leave that industry post-graduation," Eckroth says. Despite graduating into a job market that was ravaged by the pandemic, Eckroth continued to train for competition while creating content, workshoping countless cocktail-inspired signature drinks both on and off camera. That dedication finally paid off in 2022, when Eckroth became the USBC champion and World Barista runner-up. But even as one of the best baristas in the world, Eckroth makes it a point to keep their videos accessible to a wider audience. "While I do work pretty deep in the industry, a lot of my content is geared toward folks who have no knowledge of specialty coffee," Eckroth says. "I want people to walk away just a little bit more curious about coffee." This year, Eckroth will be stepping

back from competition in order to become a USBC judge and focus on expanding MorganDrinksCoffee.
—Chala June

Nightbloom

Here's the thing about good neighborhood bars: Nobody creates them. They create themselves. And knowing that, co-owners Adrian Mendez and Joaquin Rodas opened Nightbloom last April in New Orleans' Bywater neighborhood, not far from Bacchanal, their well-regarded wine bar and live music venue. Working with general manager Justin "Juice" LeClair, they created a canvas for the neighborhood to craft the bar it wants. Bywater is a former blue collar neighborhood with a long tradition of beer-and-shot bars. In recent decades it has evolved into a home for progressive-eclectics, and Rodas and Mendez thought the area was lacking what Mendez called "an adult-ass bar—you know, a place to get a well-crafted cocktail." They took over an empty space on St. Claude Avenue and set about filling it with drink. "I've done molecular stuff," says LeClair. "It's fun, it's cool, but sometimes you just want to drink a Negroni or Margarita and not try to reinvent the wheel." To further integrate into the neighborhood, they worked with Turning Tables, a New Orleans nonprofit that trains those from under-represented groups in the craft of bartending. The bar still feels somewhat spare and lean six months after opening, and they don't disagree. "If someone brings in a painting, we'll need a space for it," Rodas says. That's how a neighborhood bar gets made.
—Wayne Curtis



Navel Duties

Bold espresso and bright citrus play well together in this spirit-free riff on the Mai Tai from barista Morgan Eckroth.

$\frac{3}{4}$ oz. orgeat
 $\frac{3}{4}$ oz. fresh orange juice
(Eckroth uses Cara Cara navel oranges)
 $\frac{3}{4}$ oz. fresh lime juice
3 oz. sparkling water
2 shots of espresso, or 2 oz. strongly brewed coffee, cooled

Tools: shaker
Glass: highball
Garnish: fresh mint sprig, orange slice

Shake the first 3 ingredients without ice, then pour into an ice-filled highball glass. Add sparkling water until almost full, then float espresso on top. Garnish.

Morgan Eckroth
Portland, Oregon

Bar Contra

New York City restaurant Contra made its name (and earned its Michelin Star) with edgy tasting menus. Now, a decade later, Bar Contra just wants to have a little fun. Owners Jeremiah Stone and Fabián von Hauske Valtierra tapped longtime friend and colleague Dave Arnold—known in the bar world for his scientific techniques that made his bars Booker & Dax and Existing Conditions so groundbreaking. “We wanted Dave to do our cocktail program [at the restaurant] before we closed, and that evolved into actually changing the concept,” says von Hauske Valtierra. Launched in July, Bar Contra features highly executed yet playfully approachable cocktails by Arnold and bar manager Theo Ouya (an Existing Conditions alum) like the carbonated Passion Fruit Lowball with blanche Armagnac and gentian, or the Sagittarius B2 with rum, raspberry orgeat, and acid-adjusted raspberry. It’s “a neighborhood-style bar with our take on creative drinks and snacks,” says von Hauske Valtierra. “Nothing too fussy, just fun.” —PB

Remi Cohen

It wasn’t an auspicious start for Remi Cohen when she joined Domaine Carneros in Napa, California, as its new CEO and second-ever person to lead the winery. Her first day coincided with the commencement of the 2020 harvest, the world still deep in the throes of the pandemic. Two weeks

later, devastating wildfires ripped through the region. “Needless to say, that first year was an adventure-filled one with many challenges,” says Cohen. Now, with those panic-inducing months in the background, Cohen



focuses on the long-term future of the estate. With a management team where more than half the members are women, gender equality is at the forefront of her work. She credits women like Eileen Crane, the former CEO and founding winemaker for 30 years at Domaine Carneros, for paving the road for women in wine. “However, as I advanced in the industry, I realized that there is still a significant disparity in the number of women and the compensation of women, especially in the more senior positions,” says Cohen. “There is also work to be done to bring more diversity into the industry.” In her short tenure, Cohen has implemented several DEI initiatives; a mentorship program with nonprofit organizations such as Bâtonnage to help women in the industry; and the Le Rêve Scholarships with the Culinary Institute of America and University of California–Davis to support students in a wine master’s program who are committed to advancing diversity or sustainability in the industry. Cohen recognized early on that external-facing programs needed strong internal foundations, and she is devoted to empowering the entire Domaine Carneros team through transparency in all

aspects of the business, such as the estate’s financials. On a recent visit to the tasting room during a bustling Saturday, Cohen greeted every single team member by name; she might be CEO in title, but she is a colleague at heart. —S. Clarke

Human People Beer

The best-laid plans of brewers and industry veterans sometimes go awry. Several years ago, Modern Times Beer veterans Tim Kamolz and Andrew Schwartz joined forces with Mallorie King, who worked in the malt and hop industries, to create Seattle’s Human People Beer. They signed a lease at an adaptive-reuse project of a fish-processing plant, eyeing a 2024 opening, before construction “stalled out and we had to break the lease,” says Schwartz, who specialized in mixed-culture fermentations, barrel-aged beer, and one-off experimentals at Modern Times. Instead of languishing in limbo, the trio entered an alternating-proprietorship at Seattle’s Stoup Brewing and began brewing and packaging beers that spotlight unexpected ingredients and evade orderly categorization. That means an alpine-style pilsner with Slovenian hops, and Finding Shore, a “hoppy ale” with a bright and dreamlike label that’s heavy on vibe, light on marketing speak. “We’re trying to create something that gives people a sense of comfort when they buy it, something that they’re excited to drink,” Schwartz says. While releasing beers

at Stoup and collaborating with friends in the industry, the trio will continue to hunt for a permanent home, a place for human people to gather for a beer. Consider the brewery’s name a call to action for connection. “We can’t get it out of our heads,” Schwartz says. —JMB

Sunny’s

When Sunny’s Someday Steakhouse ended its two-year residency in Miami’s up-and-coming Little River neighborhood in May 2022, it left a serious void. The lively, cocktail-forward outdoor hot spot from the team behind Miami’s late Jaguar Sun was dubbed “Best Restaurant in America” by *Bon Appétit* and provided a much-needed distraction from the pandemic. Now, it’s back: Sunny’s, which opened in early October on the same site, is a revamped, 220-seat restaurant with two bars. In addition to the expansive outside space, anchored by a hulking banyan tree, there’s a new dining room housed within a former roofing factory. The menu emphasizes wood-fired steakhouse fare and Florida seafood, while the 400-bottle Matt Whitney–curated wine list features best-in-class bottles and esoteric gems, from Bordeaux to Swartland. Owner and bar director Will Thompson’s drinks program highlights customized Martinis, funky rums, and punchy, tropical-inflected cocktails like a guava-enhanced Cosmopolitan “that slaps,” says Thompson. “Sunny’s is one big dinner party.” —LM

Schmuck partners (from left) Moe Aljaff, Dan Binkiewicz, and Juliette Larrouy.

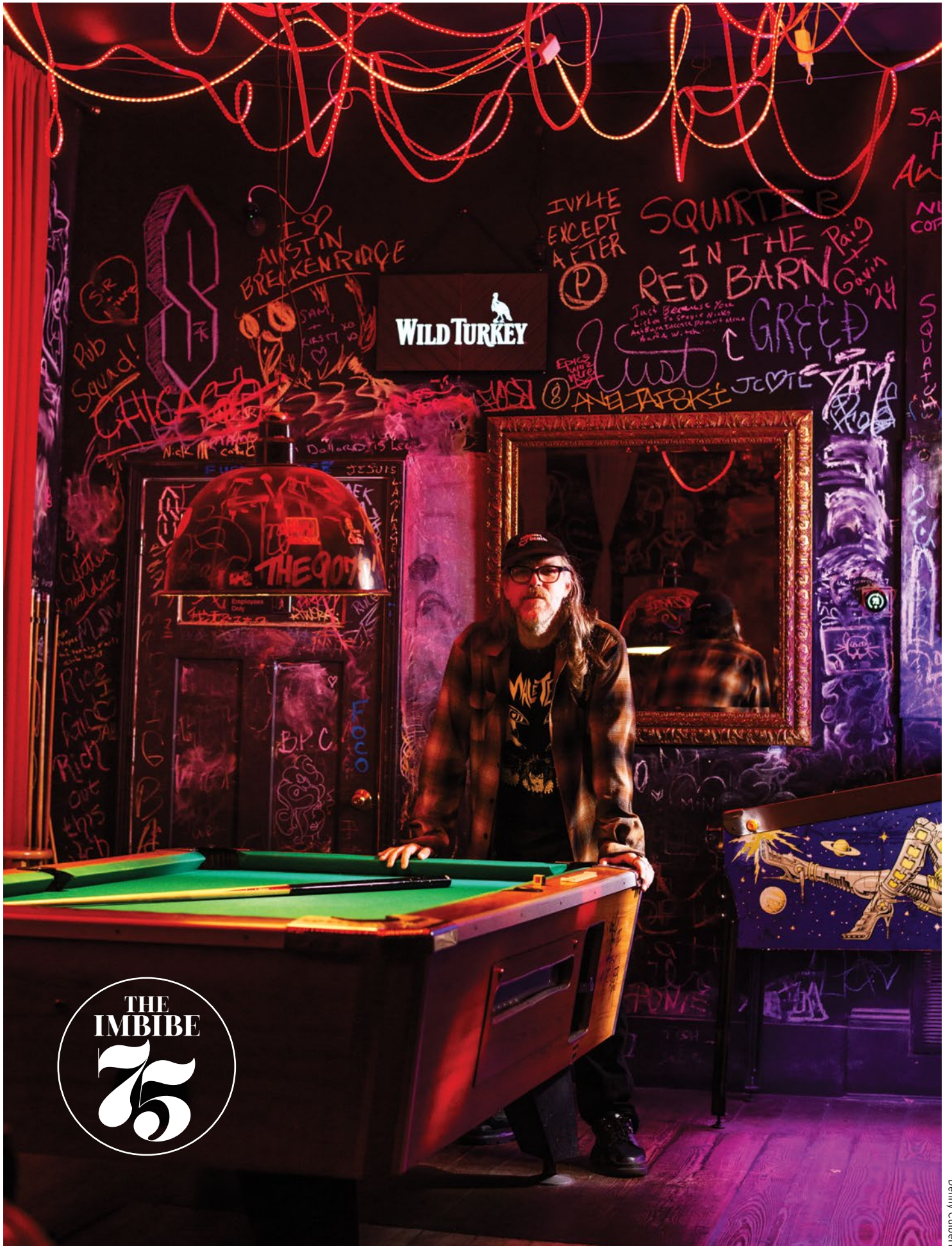


Schmuck

In 2022, Two Schmucks in Barcelona was lauded as among the world's best cocktail bars. A break with investors led founding partner Moe Aljaff and bar manager Juliette Larrouy to partner with Dan Binkiewicz and open their East Village bar, Schmuck, at the end of 2024. The goal? To translate Europe's best cocktail culture into New York-ese. "Juliette and I try to put the reflection of who we are into the bar," Aljaff says. "If you look at some of the greatest bars, it's like they use one of those *Ghostbusters* machines to suck out the personality of someone and throw it all over the walls—like, 'this is you, embodied as a bar.' No matter what the concept is, if you do that in its truest form it'll succeed, because it'll always come across as genuine. It'll always come across as true." —PC



Tune in to *Radio Imbibe* to hear more from Schmuck founders Moe Aljaff and Juliette Larrouy, starting January 21. imbibemagazine.com/podcast



WILD TURKEY

THE
IMBIBE
75



Nicholas Jarrett
at Holy Diver in
New Orleans.

Nicholas Jarrett

Whoever coined the bit of bar-business wisdom that maintains you can't open a new dive bar never met Nicholas Jarrett. The veteran bartender, who has called New Orleans his home for 12 years, has long divided his skills between high-end cocktail dens (Cure, Peychaud's) and dives (The Saint). In summer 2023, he and The Saint owner Benji Lee opened Holy Diver, a dark-as-night corner bar that marries elements of both genres, perhaps better than any watering hole to come before it. "It's a proper bar," Jarrett rasps in a voice as gravelly as the bottom of a fish tank. "We've got a stage, we've got a jukebox, there's a pool table. We have proper drinks. It's a classic neighborhood dive bar, but with something for everyone." There's also a cage, newly installed in one wall of the pool room, to be used for planned burlesque shows and go-go dancers. That the jukebox be free was important to him. He wanted to avoid a predictable Spotify playlist. Plus, he says, "Bartenders are not always the best curators of music in a space." All bartenders—a mix of those with and without cocktail experience—can easily deploy Jarrett's batched classics, which are designed to require minimal effort from the bar staff and are far above dive-bar grade. The house Martini, for instance, is a blend of two gins and two vermouths. "I think it's fair to say that there isn't anything else quite like it," he says of his

new home. "It's an homage. There was no place to get a good Martini or PM Spirit or mezcal while shooting pool." —Robert Simonson

Blueprint

"Covid changed a lot about how people consume coffee," says Nora Brady, wholesale director of Blueprint Coffee in St. Louis. After investing in equipment during pandemic shutdowns, many of Blueprint's guests "still make their first espresso or brewed coffee at home," she says. These developments continue to affect not only what people want in their cups, but also when and how they spend time in their local coffee shops, adds Mike Marquard, Blueprint's roastery director. "Cafés have evolved to include alternative beverages that aren't your standard Italian espresso menu," he says, and tend to serve as all-day co-working spaces or alcohol-free cocktail bars. To adapt to their changing market, and to grow their retail capabilities, Blueprint opened an 11,000-square-foot roastery and educational facility in the city's Tiffany-Botanical Heights neighborhood last April. "It's super exciting," says Brady. The team can now host tastings and trainings for wholesalers and average Joes "in a space that is quiet and focused and intentional." —ES

Koto Jelly Coffee

Pop into a bakery or cake shop in Japan, and you'll often find *kohii zerii*, or coffee jelly, on the menu. While the jiggly, gelatin-enhanced treat's origins are subject to debate, its introduction to Japan was via a 1914

newspaper recipe. Coffee jelly had remained largely unknown in the United States, however, until Koto Jelly Coffee launched its Seattle-based pop-up last summer. Co-founders Ree Hamai and Heywood Chan partnered with their friend, Osaka-based chef Kotone Shiotsuki, to create a "jelly coffee" that differs from the Japanese version because it's made with freshly brewed coffee, matcha, or tea, and plant-based agar-agar, which has a softer texture and is vegan-friendly. Customers can add whole or oat milk, whipping cream, or ice cream for a more luxurious experience. The trio's new brick-and-mortar in the First Hill neighborhood, opened late 2024, will enable Koto to develop collaborations with local roasters and experiment with coffee varieties, says Heywood Chan. "We wanted a community-focused business that diversifies Seattle's coffee culture." —LM

Breeze Coral Galindo

Breeze Coral Galindo might be one of the busiest people in craft beer. The Brooklyn-based brewer is the director of operations for the Michael James Jackson Foundation for Brewing & Distilling, sits on the board of directors for Chicago's Beer Culture Center, moonlights as a bartender, and is working to build New York City's first Latina-owned brewery, MiLuna Brewing. "I'm not really good at sitting still," Galindo says. Perpetual motion is a constant theme

in Galindo's professional career. She grew up in Los Angeles and became an assistant brewer at the since-shuttered Indie Brewing, before heading cross-country in summer 2019 for a position at

Brooklyn's Other Half

Brewing. She became the IPA powerhouse's lead brewer and a connective force for women in the brewing industry, creating the Other Half

Women's Forum in 2021.

The event series featured conversations with women in the industry on sexism, racism, representation, and other social issues. "There's such a big need for community within the brewing industry," Galindo says. This extends to brewery taprooms. In Los Angeles, Galindo grew accustomed to a mosaic of customers, including Latinos and people of color; New York City lacked the same varied customer base. Last year, she founded MiLuna Brewing to bridge the divide and bring Latin heritage to NYC's craft beer scene. But building a brewery in Brooklyn, where she hopes to set up MiLuna, is cost-prohibitive, and "asking for large sums of money from my family is absolutely out of the question," she says. To raise funds and interest for MiLuna, Galindo is partnering with local breweries to create beers, like a Vienna lager, that are served at ticketed events, including one featuring dinner with a Mexican chef. "I want to show people what my culture can bring to the beer industry," Galindo says. "I feel most proud of myself when I have purpose." —JMB





South for the Winter

This easy-to-make clarified punch balances bitter Italian liqueurs with tropical flavors. This recipe makes approximately 5 cocktails.

8 oz. oat milk
6 oz. pineapple juice
4 oz. aged rum
4 oz. Jamaican rum
2 oz. Campari
2 oz. Amaro Meletti
2 oz. crème de banane
1½ oz. fresh lime juice
1½ oz. fresh lemon juice

Tools: coffee filter
Glass: rocks
Garnish: dried pineapple slice

Combine all of the ingredients in a large container, stir, and refrigerate overnight. Strain the mixture through a coffee filter (multiple times if needed), until clear. To serve, pour 3 oz. into a glass filled with a large ice cube, and garnish.

Joe Briglio
Cara Cara Club
Chicago

Mari Howe

At Tikehau Lounge in Wailea on Maui's south shore, the Polynesian Pearl Diver cocktail comes with a pick crowned with a Tahitian black pearl, a souvenir for its drinker. But that's not the most important thing about the drink, explains bar manager Mari Howe, who created this riff on a tiki classic. "I incorporate oranges from my own trees, my neighbors' limes, vanilla from Oahu, local honey, and *lilikoi* butter made with passion fruit from my boyfriend's mother's yard. I garnish it with local flowers. My mom is a jewelry maker, so she makes the picks." Only the rums, from Diplomático, are produced elsewhere, though many spirits Howe uses—Kō Hana and Koloa Rums, Fid Street Gin, Ocean Vodka—are Hawaiian-made. Howe is on the forefront of Maui's new drinks movement, one crafted from hyper-local ingredients and focused on community. Shared by other bartenders who've eschewed the cloying drinks still made with processed ingredients at many Maui resorts, Howe's ethos was solidified in recent tragedies. Covid shuttered the locavore Mill House where she worked. The 2023 fires ravaged Pacifico where, as bar manager, Howe sourced from the restaurant's own farm. "On Maui, we sometimes order things from other places, but buying local makes the most sense. During times of disaster, when shipping here was limited, buying local was more important than ever," she says. "Local limes are always juicy. Maui Gold pineapple is juicy and sweet with the right acidity, and you can see where it grows. So you support island businesses and get quality.

It can be pricier, but you supplement it by growing things yourself." Howe's approach is based in the tight-knit culture of natives like her. "Everyone's your auntie and uncle here," she says. And it is invaluable to Maui producers. "Our sales fell to zero after the fires," says Hale Ihe Farm's Becky Speere. "Mari's support came through at a critical time. Hawai'i was historically built on small family businesses. We make a few dollars and spend it on the ones who support us. Mari's success is our success." —BA

Cara Cara Club

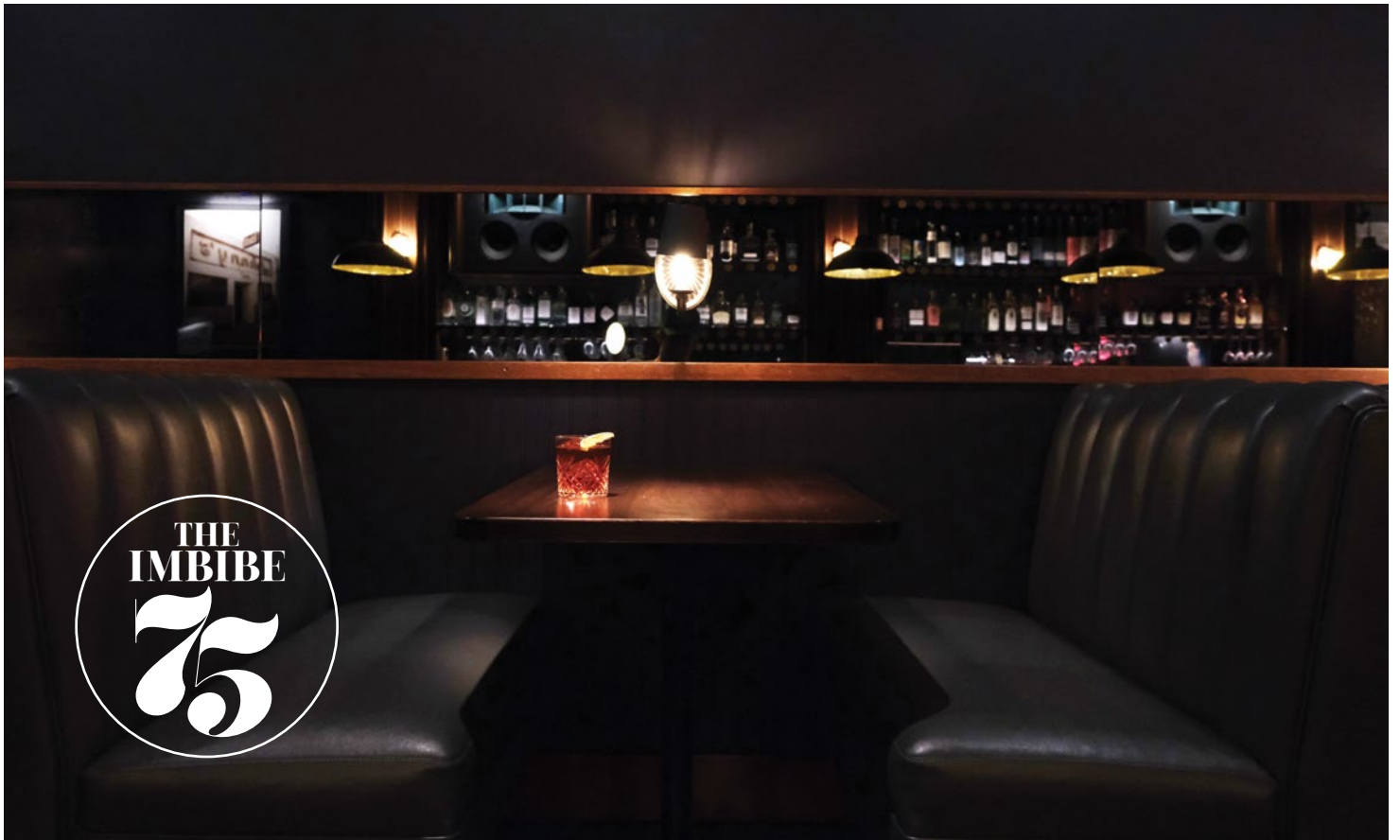
When Lily Wang and Joe Briglio opened their lively cocktail den Nine Bar in the back of Wang's parents' Chinatown restaurant Moon Palace Express, it became an instant neighborhood fave (and Imbibe 75 alum). Now Wang and Briglio, partnered with Wade Hall and Jeff Donahue, are proving their versatility when it comes to vibe with the Cara Cara Club, operating on the opposite side of the spectrum and across town in Chicago's trendy Logan Square. Bright and breezy, Cara Cara Club leans into coastal European aesthetics and flavors, with a hint of the tropical. "Joe's approach to beverage creation always involved bitter components with tropical twists," says Wang. This manifests in drinks like the clarified milk punch South for the Winter with rum, Campari, Meletti, pineapple, and banana. "We were really excited to expand our range and do something that is almost the complete opposite from Nine Bar," says Wang. —PB

**Lily Wang and Joe
Briglio at Cara Cara
Club in Chicago.**





Photos this spread: Wade Hall





Johnny's in Los Angeles.

Johnny's

Veteran bartender Eric Alperin may be better known for his role with high-concept, craft cocktail bars like LA's The Varnish, but he just knew there was something special about Johnny's. Opened in 1922 as a café and serving room, it survived Prohibition; in 1946, John "Johnny" Dysthe, expanded the bar operation. When Alperin and partners Johnny Santiago and Angus McShane bought the bar, the aim was to "evolve from the sticky dive and upgrade to an all-are-welcome vibe with good cocktails and hi-fi [audio]," says Alperin. Keeping things affordable and sustainable, the drinks are prebatched (their "Fab Five" include a Martini, Manhattan, Old Fashioned, Mezcal Negroni, and New York Sazerac) with other favorites on tap like a Paloma, Tommy's Margarita, and Dick's Espresso Martini. "We didn't just build this," says Alperin. "Johnny's is a tried-and-true staple to Highland Park. We just got lucky enough to be chosen as the torchbearers for the next 20 years." —PB

Cameron George

To call SirDavis a celebrity spirit would be akin to referring to Beyoncé as a popular vocalist. It's technically accurate but hardly the whole truth. "A lot of celebrity spirits are more of celebrity endorsements," says Cameron George, SirDavis' global head of advocacy and blender. George believes the involvement of SirDavis' famous founder—"she's been involved in every step of creating this," he says—helps differentiate

it from other star-studded spirits. The brand has a great story and a deep bench of experts to tell it. Beyoncé is the great-granddaughter of a moonshiner and George is an esteemed bartender and brand ambassador who previously served as the president of the United States Bartenders' Guild's Washington State chapter. "This brand is about integrity and storytelling and making the best spirit in the world," George says. It's a meaningful development for those eager for a more inclusive whiskey industry. "I'm seeing more of a democratization in whiskey from a global POV," he says. "There's been an invitation extended to a wider swath of people who haven't felt as incorporated into whiskey and whiskey spaces." SirDavis' August 2024 launch made major waves, but George is just getting started. "The sustaining period is going to be iconic," he says. "Watch this space." —ES

Poorvi Chordia and Abe Thomas

Poorvi Chordia and her husband, Abe Thomas, are on a mission to show that there's more to Indian tea than masala chai. "While India is known as the land of chai and Ayurvedic tisanes," she says, "it also produces artisanal, whole-leaf teas that are diverse and exceptional." In autumn 2022, they launched their online shop Herbs & Kettles, where they specialize in small-batch styles that rarely make it to the United States, such as wild-grown black tea from Manipur scented with foraged galangal, or *khalap*, the smoked and aged ancestral drink of the Naga tribes that inhabit Arunachal Pradesh. American discussions of fine

Indian teas usually begin and end in Darjeeling, a region of West Bengal established under British colonization that produces what's often called the "Champagne of tea." Chordia sources tea from Darjeeling, too, though one of her favorite producers isn't a state-recognized, origin-protected plantation. It's a mother-and-son operation founded by a former tea plucker who was tired of the low wages offered by large gardens. Instead, they buy fresh leaves from their neighbors to craft into styles practically unheard of in Darjeeling, like crisp yellow teas and lush oxidized oolongs, redolent of ripe fruit. "Many Indian tea estates are struggling, even while underpaying their workers," Chordia explains. "Some are turning into resorts, while others are closing or being bought by large corporations due to high overhead and a dwindling workforce. However, there is a promising new generation of small tea farmers that are focused on sustainability and empowering their communities." Chordia and Thomas offer tastes of these unusual brews in a monthly subscription box dedicated to one-of-a-kind productions from across India. "There's a whole world beyond Darjeeling and Assam," she says, "that's exciting and largely untapped." —Max Falkowitz

Roland Ng

Hobbies sometimes have a tendency to take over. For Roland Ng, a tech professional in the San Francisco Bay Area, a five-year stint in Singapore

prompted a growing curiosity about whisky after a friend—for whom Ng had been picking up bottles from duty-free—invited him over for dinner and a tasting. "I probably had 30, 35 tastes that night, and I remember waking up the next



morning thinking, 'What have I been missing? There's a whole world here.' " But back home, when he tried to connect with other Bay Area enthusiasts,

he found most were less interested in tasting and learning. "It was people flexing what they drank or what they owned—and you couldn't ask a question without being told you're an idiot." Lacking a community, Ng built his own, and today the San Francisco Whisky, Bourbon & Scotch Society has around 4,000 members (the largest spirits society on the West Coast). The love of whisky also led him to co-found the Fog City Social whisky festival and to attend whisky events around the world. Eventually, Ng made the leap, leaving Hewlett Packard behind to start his own whisky consulting company. Last year he signed on as general manager for the Americas for Kanosuke Whisky, a Japanese distillery he'd fallen in love with at first taste. (Kanosuke earned Distiller of the Year recognition at 2024's New Orleans Spirits Competition.) "Whisky brings together so many people of disparate backgrounds," he says. "I decided that I wanted to live my life and do things that I love, and what am I passionate about? That was whisky. I took the leap of faith and said, 'I want to do something in whisky.'" —PC

January Spirits

During 2019, Jon Langley and Lucky Preksto, two longtime New York bartenders, had been staging a series of pop-ups for a new cocktail bar they had in mind. The spine of the concept was for the bar to make as many products in-house as possible. When the pandemic hit, they shifted that dream to the production side of the booze business. "During the pandemic we weren't making sourdough," says Preksto. "We were making moonshine." By May 2023, their company, January Spirits, launched with three offerings: a gin, an amaro, and a genepy. The amaro, made with chicory and aged in rye whiskey barrels to give it a properly American character, was their first child. But the genepy, made with 27 botanicals and minimal sugar, emerged as the line's surprise breakout star. The first run of 288 bottles quickly sold out. In 2025, they plan to roll out 10,000 bottles. Last year, it won a New Orleans Spirits Competition prize for best liqueur. "We started goofing around," says Langley. "Let's see if we can come up with a Chartreuse-y sort of thing." They found success with their first try. "I thought, 'This has no right being as good as it is,'" says Langley. —RS

Brian Richey

"Anybody can pour a glass of wine or make a cocktail at home," says Brian Richey. "People go to bars for the experience." As a bartender and sommelier at Casot in Salt Lake City, Richey

is determined to make everyone feel welcome—be they wine collectors and cocktail nerds who frequent Casot for its inventive menu, or those who are new to bars or abstain from alcohol altogether.



Some of Casot's guests "were raised Mormon and haven't had a lot of exposure to wine," Richey explains. He sees it as an opportunity to share stories about the products he serves and the people who make them. A recipient of the Slow Food Negroni Week Fund's 2024 Terra Madre Salone del Gusto scholarship, Richey aims to open a bakery and wine bar with a friend and Casot alum, Todd Bradley. "I'm excited to take what I learned at Terra Madre and from producers from all over Italy and Europe, and to be able to offer them to people here who might not have tried them before," he says. "As a bartender, I can't change the world, but I have a voice. I do what I can to introduce people to interesting, artisanal products." —ES

The Riff Raff Club

On the 39th floor of Manhattan's Virgin Hotel, the Riff Raff Club is a swanky rooftop bar that doesn't take itself too seriously. "Our approach to cocktails is refined, but not overly fussy and certainly a bit cheeky at times," says Charles Joly, the consulting partner. There's a Bukowski Cocktail made with Malort—"I've been really pleasantly surprised to see how open folks are" to it, Joly says—and a Jungle Bird-inspired punch bowl as well

as an impressive vintage spirits program (the 1970s Vintage Toronto Cocktail features "Jimmy Carter-era Canadian whisky," 1970s Fernet-Branca, and aged bitters for \$75). A veteran of such lauded Chicago establishments as The Aviary and the Drawing Room, Joly is thrilled to be a part of the New York cocktail scene. "Doing a bar in New York is also a massive honor," he says. "I have a lot of respect for this scene and how hard everyone works to be successful here. I don't take that responsibility lightly." —ES

Koholā Brewing

In the summer of 2023, everything was looking up for Maui's award-winning Koholā Brewery: A new investment in capacity had the 8-year-old outfit poised to become the state's third-largest brewery. But then, the catastrophic fire that razed the town of Lahaina—their new equipment included—put everything into question. "The craft brewing community reached out immediately," says owner Mary Anderson. "It was heartwarming." Within three months, she and her team hashed out an agreement with Kona Brewing Hawaii to contract brew their flagship Talk Story pale ale, then the rest of their line. This past July, Koholā opened a brewpub and taproom in the neighboring town of Wailea featuring local brews and Hawai'i-style gastropub fare (think: fresh sashimi and kalua pork bao buns). One big bonus: She was able to retain many of the brewery's employees. While Lahaina's future is still uncertain, Anderson is looking to eventually return to the area

to build a smaller facility, while still retaining their arrangement with Kona. "A year ago I would have thought we were shutting the company down," says Anderson. "But the stars aligned pretty perfectly. It's magical." —Jennifer Fiedler

Yafa

"Yemen is often forgotten as being the birthplace of coffee cultivation as we know it today," says Ali Suliman, co-founder and roaster at Brooklyn-based coffeehouse Yafa. Suliman and his cousin, owner Hakim Sulaimani, both emigrated from Yafa (a region in South Yemen famous for its coffee) as children. "I always make the joke that coffee is literally in our blood." The cousins grew up around their family bodega in the Sunset Park neighborhood, understanding customer service and the value of small business to a community. As they grew older, they wanted to bring Yemeni coffee to the forefront of specialty coffee and created Yafa in 2019, which recently expanded to a second location in Downtown Brooklyn. While the foundations of much international coffee history is based in Yemen, the country itself has been under constant attack, and Yemeni coffee farmers and roasters need support and recognition to keep the industry viable. "Yemen has been through what feels like everlasting crises in our lifetime ... most recently through port blockades and U.S.-imposed sanctions," says Suliman. "It's important to us that we never lose our connection to our home and always find ways to support it." —S. Conde

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Natasha Bahrami

As founder of The Gin Room in St. Louis, Natasha Bahrami has an intimate understanding of the sheer vastness of gin. The desire to bring others into the gin space—first at her bar, and then through regular Gin World events in St. Louis and Washington, D.C.—is leading her to the next step: taking Gin World on the road to cities across the U.S. through pop-ups, seminars, and beyond. The aim is to celebrate gin in all its glory, and to give gin lovers the opportunity to explore the immensity of the gin category. “Gin has such a range of flavor profiles, it can be almost anything you want it to be,” Bahrami says. “It can be expressive where you mold cocktails around it, or it can be fluid and playful. That range in spectrum is one of the most attractive things about gin.” —PC



Hear an expanded conversation with Natasha Bahrami about her plans for Gin World in 2025 on *Radio Imbibe* starting February 4. imbibemagazine.com/podcast



Long Legs

With rich notes of chocolate and raspberry lifted by Lambrusco, the Long Legs is a spritz befitting the cold weather.

3 oz. Lambrusco
 1 oz. pineapple juice
 ¾ oz. red bitter liqueur
 ¼ oz. crème de cacao
 ¼ oz. raspberry liqueur
 ¼ oz. fresh lemon juice

Tools: barspoon
 Glass: large tumbler
 Garnish: orange slice, mint sprig, parasol

In the glass, combine liqueurs and juices with 1 oz. of the Lambrusco. Fill the glass with ice, top with remaining 2 oz. of Lambrusco, gently stir, and garnish.

Sam Ross and Michael McIlroy
Good Guy's
New York City

Adeel Asif

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, there is an 80 percent unemployment rate for individuals with disabilities, a statistic that gets under the skin of behavioral specialist and educator Adeel Asif. "Working with the students for [10] years and seeing them graduate and not be able to find employment was pretty frustrating," Asif says. Determined to create more opportunities for the disability community, Asif founded Able Coffee in 2018, roasting beans sourced globally and hiring students to assist with production. By taking the vocational and social skills that he was teaching in the classroom and bringing them into a workplace setting, Asif expanded Able to two brick-and-mortar locations in Orange County, which trained and employed more than 100 people from 2018 to 2023. "Whatever disability that they're going through, it's hard; I've seen it with my family," Asif says. "Seeing them grow and be able to succeed made me want to continue." At the start of 2024, Asif completely rebranded the company to INC Coffee (short for "inclusion") in order to better align with its mission "to be inclusive and employ anybody—all disabilities and all walks of life," Asif adds. Moving away from a puzzle piece logo, which many folks associate exclusively with autism, INC Coffee can now be identified by an ampersand that reflects the wide spectrum of experiences held by its employees. "The staff that we have love being here," Asif says. "Not only the individuals with disabilities, but even our [neurotypical]

baristas. They love the community that we've created." —CJ

Good Guy's

Let's say you run one of the world's most lauded cocktail bars in a tiny boxcar space, and the neighboring storefront becomes available. Do you simply expand operations? Or, do you swing for the fences and create something completely different? If you're Michael McIlroy and Sam Ross, co-owners of Manhattan's Attaboy, you opt for the latter. In June 2024, the duo introduced Good Guy's, a bright and breezy wine bar. "We knew we couldn't do Attaboy 2.0—also that would have been too easy—so we leaned into the bars that we love when we visit places like Paris, Barcelona, or San Sebastian," says McIlroy. The bar serves an array of cocktails, low- and no-alcohol options, and makes a case for year-round spritzing with drinks like the sweater-weather-ready Long Legs (Luxardo Bitter, cocoa, and Lambrusco). The of-the-moment wine list was created by Forsythia's Charlotte Mirzoeff and features pét-nats and chillable reds. "We view the wine program as a natural extension of our spritz offerings: creative, approachable, and globally influenced," Ross says. A short menu of shareable toasts and dips, plus the friendly staff and wide selection of vinyl records, give the space a convivial energy. "There's truly nothing like Manhattan's bar culture," says Ross, and he should know. —ES

Michael McIlroy (left) and Sam Ross at Good Guy's in New York City.





Photos this spread: Moe Alijafi



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Kyo Dominick

When Kyo Dominick's dance career was dashed by a torn ACL, he sought comfort in wine and whiskey. But it's not what you think. ... "Between auditions in New York, I'd always gone to different wine and spirits bars and tried different things—that really sparked my interest," Dominick says. Even while still working as a dancer—with gigs on *SNL*, at the Grammys, in *Magic Mike Live* in Las Vegas, among others—he'd been enamored by the appeal of wine and whiskey, attending tastings to learn more, and picking up day jobs in wine retail. A fortuitous encounter at one tasting with Monique Huston, Winebow's vice president of spirits, prompted Dominick to take a more serious interest in his liquid education, shortly before being sidelined by injury. "She said, 'You have to do something after you're finished with dancing,' and she was right," he says. "That's how I got here." The "here" in Dominick's case is Napa wine country, where he moved in 2022 and now manages sales for Karolus Wine Imports, while working to finish his diploma with the Wine & Spirit Education Trust. Dance and drink are considerably different career paths, but Dominick sees this evolving interest as better suited to the long run. "I'm in such a profound place," he says. "For so long, I had these big goals, and I wanted to dance for these people on these stages, and they were so specific. But as I moved into wine, I found that I could be a lot more grounded,

and not have to have all the answers right away. Maybe that's me maturing as a man, and maybe it's me maturing as a professional, but I'm taking it one step at a time." —PC

The Roasting Room

After more than a decade of bringing Ethiopian-style café culture to upper Manhattan by way of Buunni, their fleet of coffee shops, co-founders Sarina Prabasi and Elias Gurmu opened The Roasting Room, a roasting and educational facility in the South Bronx. It's a resource not only for Prabasi and Gurmu, who had been driving long distances to roast their beans, but also for their uptown neighbors. "In New York, specialty coffee tends to be concentrated in Brooklyn and downtown Manhattan," says Prabasi. The Roasting Room, which debuted in September, can roast and pack more than 14,000 pounds of coffee daily and offers a range of educational services, from beginners' barista training to advanced roasting techniques. "There isn't a clear career path if you're a barista," says Prabasi. "We're trying to make that more accessible to people." —ES

Aneka Saxon

Aneka Saxon doesn't always take the easy road. "I tend to make things hard on myself and my team by making these wild, over-the-top presentations and infusions and what have you," she says. "It's exciting to be part of something new and different." As executive beverage director for Chicago's Machine Hospitality Group behind

bars like Machine and the newly opened Dearly Beloved, Saxon puts her tenacious creativity to work. Imaginative cocktails include Love in the Night (makrut lime-infused Japanese gin, agave nectar, absinthe, orange bitters, dried lemon peel, and coconut horchata chai foam) and Emotional Bankruptcy (tequila blanco, pine nut and parmesan syrup, coconut milk, smoked olive brine, and extra dry vermouth). All those globetrotting ingredients are often accompanied by elaborate presentations to complement what's in the glass. After all, it's great when a drink looks beautiful on camera, but "the experience should be more worthy than the photograph," she says. A Violet Hour alum, Saxon is pleased to see Chicago's cocktail culture evolve and include varying bar experiences. "There's depth in Chicago that you don't get in a lot of cities," she says. The bar community is "lovingly trying to one-up each other all the time, and we make our jobs really difficult by continually trying to push the envelope," she says. "You get some really cool experiences as a result." At Dearly Beloved, Saxon aims to inspire other beverage directors to stretch their imaginations even further. "The public is ready for it." —ES

Whoopsie Daisy

Don't let the exposed brick walls and tinned fish boards fool you: Whoopsie Daisy isn't a run-of-the-mill, cookie-cutter Brooklyn

wine bar. Partners Piper Kristensen, Conor McKee, and Ivy Mix are NYC hospitality veterans who co-own Fiasco!, a popular nearby bottle shop. They want to bring Fiasco!'s easygoing vibes to Whoopsie



Daisy, which opened in Brooklyn's Crown Heights neighborhood in May. "Wine bars are kind of where cocktail bars were 12 years ago, where people would shame

you for wanting a vodka drink or whatever," says Mix, who also co-owns Brooklyn's Leyenda. "That's not the game we want to play." Instead, the team keeps things breezy with a short, approachable wine list ("If you don't know how to pronounce a grape variety, that's OK," says Mix). The focus is on curation, not comprehensiveness, explains McKee. "If you want to dig for gems, we certainly have those," he says, "but we didn't want to hand somebody a drinks menu that requires pages of flipping, where you don't know where to begin." In addition to natural and traditional wines, Whoopsie Daisy serves a tight list of beers, classic cocktails, NA drinks, and seasonal snacks that range from \$5 potato chips to \$20 Portuguese mackerel in brava sauce. The bar has a weekday happy hour on draft beer, wine, and vermouth, and has hosted pop-ups with Bad Larry's Pizza, Flatbush Oyster Co., and others. "We're trying to be really versatile and bring a diversity of fun, engaging things to the community," says Kristensen. —ES

Grover and Scarlet Sanschagrín

When Grover and Scarlet Sanschagrín founded the Tequila Matchmaker website and app, they didn't expect it to lead to criminal charges. But in 2024, Mexican authorities raided the pair's home in Tlaquepaque, accusing them of creating and selling fake tequila, and adulterating tequila. It was a dramatic, and ironic, turn of events, given that the Sanschagríns are at the head of a movement advocating against additives in tequila. Or rather, as Grover Sanschagrín says, they're advocates for being open about it. "I'm not trying to say additive-free tequilas are better or worse: People should just know," he explains. "It's about transparency in labeling." Additives in tequila are required to be disclosed under a certain weight, but Tequila Matchmaker started offering an additive-free listing in 2020, confirmed through lab tests and distillery visits. Brands opted in to the voluntary program, which took off as tequila consumers—a growing population in the United States—became more aware of additives. The Consejo Regulador de Tequila (CRT), the industry's regulatory body, took notice—as did the Mexican government. Then the raid happened. It didn't stop the Sanschagríns (now living in the United States), who turned the additive-free program into a registered U.S. 501(c)(3) nonprofit called the Additive Free Alliance. The organization attracted even more participation from

tequila brands and support from distillers, retailers, bar and restaurant owners, and consumers. But in late 2024, the CRT told several tequila brands that they are forbidden from using terms like "additive-free" in any capacity unless they provided an unspecified form of proof—even on third-party websites. To avoid harming the brands it set out to help, the Additive Free Alliance scrubbed its roster, though mezcal and other agave spirits are still listed, and it will keep pushing for transparency across the board. "We'll continue with this for as long as there's no requirement for transparency in spirits labeling," Grover says. "We feel like our role is to help shed some light on that for those people who are interested." —SSB



Evelyn Chick

When Hong Kong-born, Vancouver-raised Evelyn Chick first landed in Toronto 10 years ago, she thought she was just passing through. "To be honest, this was kind of a transition city for me," recalls Chick. "I thought I was on my way to New York and thinking about greener pastures." While she was busy making plans for her Manhattan move, though, life started happening in Toronto. In hindsight, that's no surprise, given that Chick is that rare human who has a ton of great ideas and also knows how to make them happen. Last summer, not only did this award-winning bar owner launch Feastie, a one-day "Sip & Snack" festival featuring 40 vendors, featuring local BIPOC and

female-owned businesses, serving everything from cocktails to Filipino BBQ, she also invested in some real estate. Not a second bar venue, but, instead, a studio that doubles as a space for content creation and a head office for her ever-expanding Evelyn Chick Projects. In her spare time, she did a refresh and quick reno on two-year-old Simpl Things, her award-winning cocktail bar in Toronto's west end. "It doesn't feel like it's work, because my whole being is about wanting to create experiences for other people," she says. "And I don't feel tired, because what a lot of people don't see is that I don't do all of these things. I have teams that carry the load of our day-to-day tasks." Those teams don't just make it possible for her to run her enterprises, they've also become a reason for her to keep expanding. It can be hard for people in the industry to figure out how to make the most of their transferable skills, and she says she's trying to light the path. "I sometimes feel like I'm fostering a little family," says Chick. "A family of really driven, Type A, organized, highly communicated women." While she won't dismiss the idea that she might one day "hit a button" and sell everything, it's looking less and less likely. "I feel very fortunate to be in the position I'm in," she adds. "And I feel like I owe it to that family to just live it out a little bit." —Christine Sismondo

Janice Bailon

Since her first job as a barista at age 14, Janice Bailon knew she liked being behind a bar. An interest in cocktails led her to seek mentorship from anyone who would provide it as she worked her way

up in the industry, moving from LA to San Francisco. "I always wanted to get behind a craft bar. I got hired at dive bars, clubs, restaurants ... I couldn't seem to break the seal at craft bars," says Bailon. "Some places would let me put a cocktail on the menu but said I was 'such a valuable server' or that I 'look better in a skirt' or that I wasn't tall enough to be behind the bar." Undeterred by the industry's prevalent misogyny, Bailon landed behind the bar at Bourbon & Branch, later leading programs at spots like Liholiho Yacht Club and For the Record. She launched the Hospitality of Asians & Pacific Islanders (HAPI) community, a nonprofit that creates space for those of API descent. Now, after moving to New York City last February, Bailon is the bar manager at Brooklyn's Leyenda. "It seemed like a natural fit to work with a pan-Latin program—I have such a great passion and admiration for those cultures," says Bailon, who's traveled to Mexico frequently since 2015 to learn about spirits. "But it was also the opportunity to work with Julie [Reiner] and Ivy [Mix]. It's very rare that you see two powerhouse women who hold such amazing positions in this community." Now Bailon can use her own position to continue community building on the East Coast. "I love being able to mentor talent and give them the tools they need to be successful," she says. "And I love connecting with people from other cultures. My biggest thing is representation and honoring the cultures that we have." —PB

Janice Bailon
at Leyenda in
Brooklyn.





Gilly's House of Cocktails

The room got a fresh coat of paint, and the old carpeting had to go. But Erick Castro liked Gilly's the way it was. A longtime neighborhood favorite in San Diego's North Park, Gilly's is a departure from Castro's previous projects (Polite Provisions and the notably opulent Raised by Wolves), but it fills a niche—or rather, protects one. "There's an evaporation of third places here in the U.S., and I think that's largely by design, which is a shame," says Castro. "I wanted to keep the pricing low, to create a place that people could pop into two or three times a week ... If the clientele doesn't look like the neighborhood, it's a red flag for me." But because it's still Erick Castro, expect those reasonably priced drinks to be just as intentional as any craft cocktail bar. "We vastly over-deliver on the cocktails." —PB



Learn more about Gilly's House of Cocktails and Castro's quest to preserve the neighborhood bar at imbibemagazine.com

Marie Yoshimizu

Marie Yoshimizu is hardly the only person to have picked up a cocktail shaker during the pandemic. But while most home bartenders had ambitions no higher than perfecting their Jungle Bird or flexing their Margarita muscle, Yoshimizu set her sights a little differently. Originally from Japan, Yoshimizu was then living in Michigan, and began posting her cocktail projects on Instagram (@mixwithmarie) and connecting with professional bartenders. She started testing out her home-honed skills by entering cocktail competitions from brands such as Garrison Brothers and Licor 43. A move to the Seattle area in 2022 gave her the opportunity to get behind a working bar and hone her technique for actual guests. That's when things took off—she landed in the top 30 at the prestigious World Class competition in 2023, and in 2024, she earned the lead mixologist role at the Intercontinental Hotel in Bellevue, Washington, while also reaping a Tales of the Cocktail educational scholarship from the Slow Food Negroni Week Fund. “Although I’ve won and been a finalist in several cocktail competitions, I still consider myself a new bartender, and the Negroni Week scholarship was for newcomers, so I decided to go for it to build connections in the industry,” she says. “We focused on the sustainability part of the industry with [Slow Drinks author] Danny Childs, it was very good.” Even as Yoshimizu refines her skills behind the bar and enters competitions, she’s keeping one foot on the career path

she’d been following before she ever picked up a shaker. “I’m a bartender, but I’m still an aerospace systems engineer as well,” she says. “You could say I’m a rocket scientist on the side.” —PC

Bar Lienzo

Lauren “LP” O’Brien may have become a household name when she won the first season of Netflix’s *Drink Masters*. But for those in the industry, O’Brien has long been an outspoken advocate for cultural integration, education, and mental healthcare for those in hospitality, co-founding Focus on Health during the pandemic. So it’s unsurprising that O’Brien’s first bar project will put mentorship front and center. Currently in the planning stages, Bar Lienzo will function as an incubator for both drinks and food. “Picture a space where chefs and bartenders can test out concepts, build menus, and even host pop-ups,” explains O’Brien. “It’s a place that encourages risk-taking in a supportive setting, with the goal of fostering innovation.” Planned for the mid-Atlantic area, Bar Lienzo (“canvas” in Spanish) will give O’Brien the opportunity to offer hands-on mentorship and community building. “I want to be deeply involved in the creative process—whether that’s behind the bar developing cocktails, working with chefs on pairing menus, or mentoring up-and-coming talent,” says O’Brien. “I also see myself playing a key role in shaping the culture of the space, ensuring it remains a supportive and innovative environment for everyone involved.” —PB



Tiger's Claw

Flavors of coffee and cinnamon add wintry depth to this tropical highball.

2 oz. reposado tequila
1 oz. pineapple juice
¾ oz. fresh lime juice
½ oz. cinnamon syrup
½ oz. coffee liqueur
2 dashes orange bitters

Tools: shaker
Glass: Collins
Garnish: orange half-moon, mint sprig

Shake all of the ingredients with ice, pour (unstrained) into a Collins glass, then garnish.

Cinnamon Syrup: In a saucepan, add 18 oz. of water by weight and ½ oz. of cinnamon sticks. Bring to a boil, then simmer for 20 minutes. Remove from heat, strain out the cinnamon, and add 15 oz. of granulated sugar by weight, stirring until sugar dissolves. Cool, bottle for use, and keep refrigerated for up to 2 weeks.

Erick Castro
Gilly's House of Cocktails
San Diego

Panama

Just two decades ago, coffee from Panama was virtually unknown beyond its borders. Recognizing the quality of their beans but lacking awareness from the market, producers took action. “The turning point was the formation of the Specialty Coffee Association of Panama in the late 1990s, when coffee prices were extremely low,” says Hunter Tedman, president of SCAP and a longtime coffee grower. “But perhaps the most impactful moment in the industry was the rediscovery of the Geisha variety.” In 2004, a Geisha coffee from Hacienda La Esmeralda swept the Best of Panama coffee auction, breaking records in both points awarded and cost per pound. Today, it still ranks among the most expensive coffees in the world, and Geisha beans from Panama in general remain globally prized.

An ideal climate and terroir are largely to thank for the quality of Panama’s coffee. The vast majority of specialty beans are grown in the Chiriquí province around Boquete and Volcán-Candela, bordering Costa Rica. “All the coffee grows in the foothills of the Barú Volcano,” explains Tedman. At some 11,400 feet above sea level, the dormant volcano is the highest point in Panama. On the surrounding hillsides, many farmers grow their coffee plants among the forest at upwards of 5,000 feet. “Our terroir consists of volcanic soils at a high altitude with cool, misty days, and a distinct dry season.”

Today, most producers work with multiple varieties such as Catuai and Typica, but Geisha remains the quintessential cup. “For Panama Geisha we always look for clean, sweet, and citric cups with intense floral aromas like jasmine, lemongrass, and bergamot,” says Tedman. “Florals are the Holy Grail of coffee because, unlike fruity notes, they cannot be created during processing—they come from the variety and terroir.” Does the emphasis on Geisha paint Panama into a box on the coffee market? Perhaps, but Tedman thinks the country can use it to their advantage. “I see Panama solidifying the Panama Geisha brand as a luxury product,” he says. “But Panama producers are extremely innovative, and the search for better processing methods and new varieties is constant.”

Story by Penelope Bass

Illustrations by Matty Newton

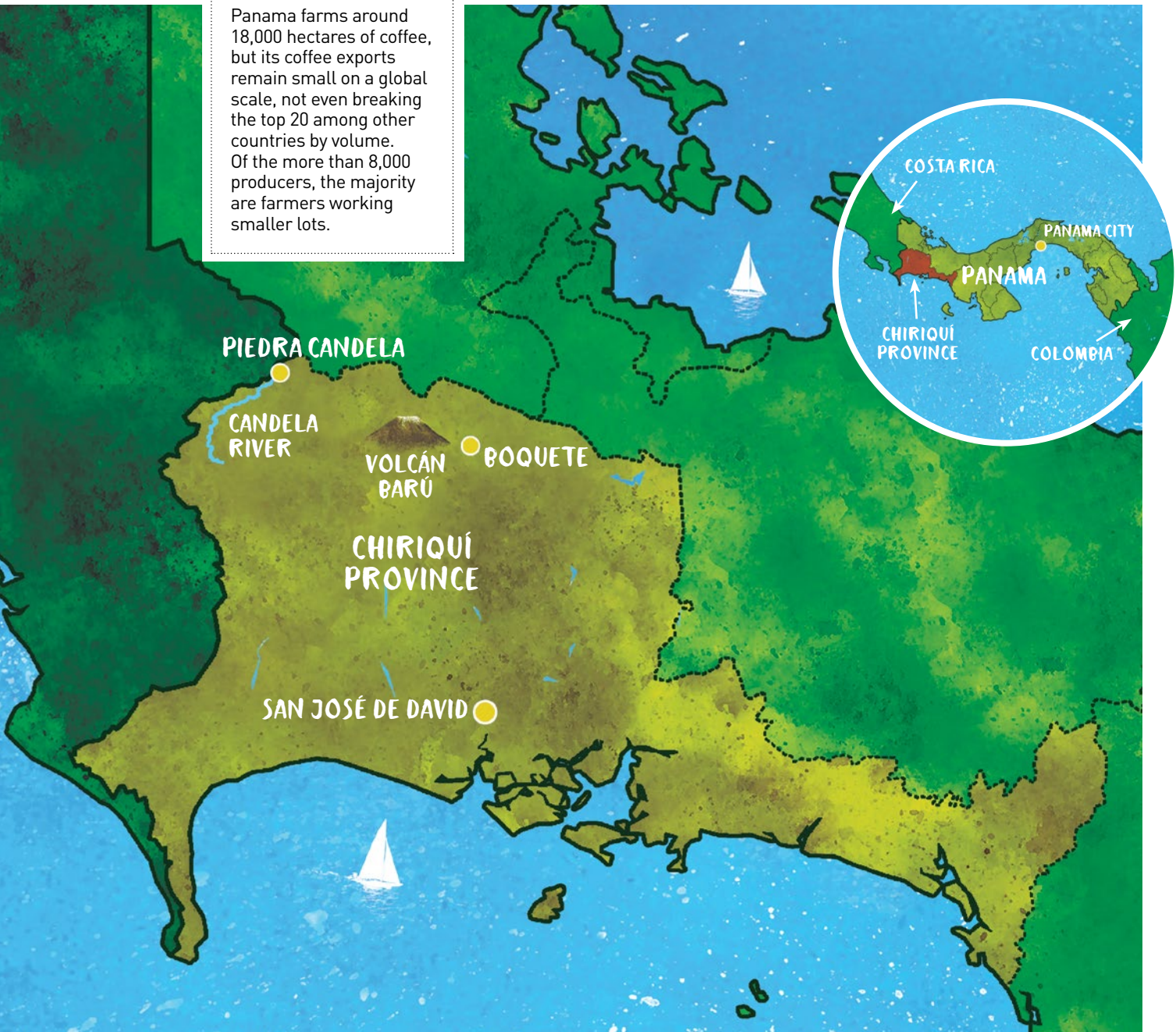


The story goes that Geisha plants were first introduced to Panama in the 1960s by Francisco “Don Pachi” Serracín who brought the plants over from Costa Rica, intrigued by their disease resistance. But the low-yielding plants were nearly forgotten until Daniel Peterson, of Hacienda La Esmeralda, replanted them at a higher elevation and ultimately produced the batch that gained global attention in 2004.

4 TO TRY

While Panamanian coffees tend to be more limited in production, most specialty producers export to the United States. Their coffees can be frequently found from quality roasters such as Café Unido—which specializes in coffee from Panama—Passenger Coffee, and Onyx Coffee Lab.

Panama farms around 18,000 hectares of coffee, but its coffee exports remain small on a global scale, not even breaking the top 20 among other countries by volume. Of the more than 8,000 producers, the majority are farmers working smaller lots.



Hacienda La Esmeralda

Founded in 1967 and still run by the Peterson family, Hacienda La Esmeralda is the producer that rediscovered the possibilities of Geisha coffee in Panama on their Jaramillo farm in the Boquete River Valley. Today many of their top-performing lots are still sourced from small patches under Jaramillo's tall shade trees. haciendaesmeralda.com

Black Moon Farm

A regenerative farm run by Hunter Tedman, Black Moon is located in the mountains of Alto Quiel, Boquete. Tedman focuses on luxury-level coffee varieties such as Geisha, Chiroso, and Pink Bourbon, and also experiments with processing methods such as anaerobic fermentation and dark-room drying. *Instagram: @blackmoonfarmpanama*

Lamastus Family Estates

Since 1918, the Lamastus family has run three farms high in the hillsides of Boquete, planting beans as high as 6,000 feet and keeping more than half of their hectares dedicated as forest preserve. In 2024, their Geisha Natural took first place (marking their seventh win) at the Best of Panama competition. lamastusfamilyestates.com

Finca La Alquería

A boutique, family-run operation, La Alquería is helmed by young producer José Porta in Volcancito, Boquete. Growing varieties like Yellow Bourbon, Pacamara, and Geisha at 4,700 feet, Porta is a newcomer gaining fans for his experimentation with processing methods to reduce acidity while highlighting fruitier flavors. scap-panama.com/finca-la-alqueria

Phoenix, Arizona

With nearly 2 million residents in the city, everything in Arizona's capital is growing fast—including its bar scene. "Cocktail culture is strong, and is probably about as strong as it's been in the last 10 years," says Mat Snapp, a partner in Barter and Shake, the consultancy behind Phoenix's award-winning concept bar, Century Grand. Snapp moved to Phoenix as a student in the 1990s, began to work in bars and restaurants in the early aughts, and is thrilled to see the level of talent now shaping the city's evolving cocktail scene. "I'm impressed every day by the knowledge and the thirst for knowledge that bartenders have across the city," he says. That free-wheeling creativity behind the stick sometimes outpaces locals' appetites for adventure, Snapp says; as a positive offshoot, many cutting-edge bars have judgment-free vibes and menus that give crowd-pleasing Margaritas just as much care and attention as lacto-fermented mushroom infusions. "You need to have Metallica's greatest hits in your front pocket and Bob Dylan's B-sides in your back pocket," he says. It's a promising playlist. *By Emily Saladino*



Century Grand

Modus Operandi: "There are three very specific and elaborate experiences at Century Grand," Snapp says. Undertow is a tiki bar with tropical drinks, while Platform 18 is modeled after a 1920s train car and serves cocktails like The Gibson Girl (gin or vodka, dry vermouth, sake, orange bitters, and lemon oil) and 54th Street Club (popcorn-infused reposado tequila, Cointreau, lime juice, togarashi, and pandan). Grey Hen takes cues from Prohibition-era Chinatown; its menu, designed to look like a 1920s New York City newspaper, riffs on everything from burlesque (the Stars and Garters cocktail features cardamom-infused tequila and hibiscus liqueur) to wonton soup (gin, bourbon, yellow Chartreuse, wonton broth, and toasted sesame). "We're having way too much fun out here," Snapp says. Since opening in 2019, Century Grand has been ranked among The World's 50 Best Bars and was named Bar of the Year at Tales of the Cocktail's 2023 Spirited Awards.

Coordinates: 3626 E. Indian School Rd. // 602-739-1388 // centurygrandphx.com

BARCOA Agaveria

Modus Operandi: An extensive selection of agave spirits headlines BARCOA, a bi-level bar located behind XICO, a Latin and Indigenous art gallery, in a 1928 former hardware store in the National Register of Historic Places. The sleek, dimly lit lower level offers elegant cocktails like *Ellas Caminaron en Fila* (mezcal, coffee liqueur, house-made grenadine, pineapple and lime juices, and Angostura) alongside a 40-odd-page menu of tequila, mezcal, sotol, raicilla, and other Mexican spirits. The more casual first floor serves typical cantina cocktails like Margaritas, Carajillos, and the Batanga (blanco tequila, lime juice, and Mexican Coca-Cola), all for \$7 during the weekday happy hour from 4 to 7 p.m. There's also a patio with a food truck with quesadillas, chips and guacamole, and churros; and the space hosts events including DJs spinning Latin dance music, free Spanish classes, bachata lessons, and karaoke Sundays. "They've helped build an incredible community, especially among Latin bar pros," says Snapp.

Coordinates: 829 N. 1st Ave. // 602-980-0788 // barcoaphx.com

Greenwood Brewing

Modus Operandi: "Megan Greenwood is a local who is making unbelievable beer," Snapp says of this woman-owned downtown brewery. In 2020, after three years of contract brewing, Greenwood opened the lively space that includes a dog-friendly patio, year-round beer garden, and array of award-winning beers. Flagships include the easy-drinking Herstory Pale Ale, which is made with Mosaic, Falconer's Flight, and Warrior hops; as well as a dry-hopped Rosemary IPA and Purpose Pilsner, a bright, Bohemian-style pilsner made with 100 percent Saaz hops. Experimental beers change frequently and include a blueberry wheat ale and gose-style sour made with seasonal fruit. The welcoming space hosts live music and trivia nights, and displays exhibitions by female-identifying artists. Greenwood also organizes fundraisers and donates approximately 20 percent of its annual profits to organizations like Fresh Start Women's Foundation, UMOM, and Girls on the Run.

Coordinates: 922 N. 5th St. // 602-875-8577 // greenwoodbrews.com



From left: Grace Stufkosky, courtesy of Greenwood Brewing, Kyle Ledebor

From left: Century Grand, Greenwood Brewing, the Land of Mountains cocktail at Highball.

Highball

Modus Operandi: Ever since two Barter and Shake alums opened this cozy, low-lit cocktail bar in 2020, it's racked up an array of local and national awards, including *Phoenix New Times*' Best New Bar in 2021 and several Spirited Awards nods at Tales of the Cocktail. The annually rotating cocktail menu includes riffs on classics, like a Nitro Espresso Martini and a Garibaldi made with a coconut fat-washed house aperitivo blend, as well as inventive creations like the Saturday Night Special, a boozy number featuring Lapsang Souchong-infused rye alongside sherry, bourbon, scotch, and herbal liqueur. "Their menu is a very strong representation of the capabilities of bar people in Phoenix," Snapp says. He tends to order off-menu "and ask for an Angostura-forward Gin & Tonic," especially when the Highball team has one of their unique gin infusions available, made with ingredients like tea, herbs, or dehydrated mushrooms. **Coordinates:** 1514 N. 7th Ave. // 602-675-4244 // highballphx.com

Lux Central

Modus Operandi: In 2020, after functioning as a traditional coffee shop for nearly a decade, Lux expanded its footprint and operations to open an interior cocktail bar, dubbed Lux Salon, in the rear of its Uptown building. Psychedelic-looking Tom Dixon light fixtures, vibrant wall art, and a canary-yellow tufted sofa brighten the cavernous space. The sleek wood bar serves creative cocktails like a Last Word riff made with mezcal, crisp white Sangria with rum and sliced peaches, and a daily rotating punch (previous iterations include gin and Champagne, or bourbon plus Aperol, strawberries, grapefruit, and thyme). The kitchen serves not-to-be-missed comfort food classics, Snapp says. "They have one of the world's best BLT sandwiches in the history of time. You think you know what a BLT is, but this one will change your life." **Coordinates:** 4402 N. Central Ave. // 602-327-1396 // luxcoffee.com

Gracie's Tax Bar

Modus Operandi: Grace Perry sang with Phoenix metal band Landmine Marathon before she opened this low-key neighborhood joint in what used to be Abbey Tax Services in downtown Phoenix in 2017. "It's a hole in the wall," says Snapp, and a great place to go for a shot and a beer—his duo of choice is Maker's on the rocks plus an ice-cold Coors Original. In addition to a daily, 4 to 7 p.m. happy hour that includes \$5 well drinks and \$7-9 mini beer pitchers, Gracie's serves crowd-favorite fried pickles, tater tots, and traditional and vegetarian chopped cheese sandwiches. The pet-friendly outdoor patio hosts DJ sets and movie screenings; other events include craft nights, pop-ups with local restaurants and wineries, and fundraisers with nonprofits like AZ Hugs, which serves unhoused communities in the area. "You always have a great time at Gracie's," Snapp says. **Coordinates:** 711 N. 7th Ave. // 602-793-1110 // graciestaxbar.com

cravings A cozy winter meal gets aromatic appeal from dry white wine.



Braised Duck Legs with Olives, Rosemary, and Garlic

4 duck legs (about 2 pounds/910 g), extra fat trimmed
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
¼ cup (60 ml) olive oil
1 yellow onion, peeled and cut into 8 wedges
1 head garlic, sliced in half across the middle
2 (4-inch/10 cm) sprigs rosemary
8 to 10 sprigs thyme, tied with kitchen twine
½ teaspoon red chile flakes
2 cups (480 ml) dry white wine
2 cups (480 ml) chicken stock
Zest of 1 lemon, cut into thin slivers
8 ounces (225 g) green olives, like Lucques

The night before cooking, cut the skin on the shin bone of each duck leg, just above the knobby ankle bone. Season the duck legs with salt and lots of black pepper. Place on a plate or flat dish, uncovered, and refrigerate overnight.

When you're ready to cook, preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C). In a large, heavy skillet that can hold 4 duck legs, heat the olive oil over medium-high heat. When the oil shimmers, add the seasoned duck and sear on both sides until browned, 4 to 5 minutes per side. Remove from the pan and set aside. Pour out all but 2 tablespoons of the fat.

Add the onion, garlic, rosemary, thyme, and chile flakes and sauté for about 2 minutes, until the onions just start to soften and brown. Pour in the wine and chicken stock and scrape up any browned bits left on the bottom of the pot. Add the lemon zest and olives.

Place the duck legs in a large baking dish. Pour in the white wine-onion combination. The liquid should come about two-thirds of the way up the side of the duck; add a little water if not. Place the uncovered baking dish in the oven and braise for 90 minutes to 2 hours. If the meat starts to look too dark, cover the dish with aluminum foil. The duck is done when a small knife slides easily into the thickest part of the leg. Serve directly from the baking dish.

Reprinted from Sunlight & Breadcrumbs: Making Food with Creativity & Curiosity by Renee Erickson with Sara Dickerman. Photographs © 2024 by Renee Erickson. Published by Abrams.

Renee Erickson

Braising Beauty

Winter is the ideal time to cook something stewy and savory in a hot oven. This one-pot wonder from James Beard Award-winning chef Renee Erickson's third cookbook, *Sunlight & Breadcrumbs*, cooks duck legs with olives, rosemary, and garlic until it's all impossibly tender and aromatic. There's very little hands-on cooking time: you leave the seasoned duck legs uncovered overnight in the fridge to crisp up the skin; the next day, a braising liquid of equal-parts chicken stock and dry white wine tenderizes the meat and veggies. While you don't need to pour a top-shelf bottle into the pot, use a wine that you like the taste of for the best results. Serve each bowl with crusty bread, and put your leftovers to work the next day. "If you end up with any extra duck, the pulled meat is delicious in pasta or crisped and tossed with frisée salad," Erickson writes. It's an easy, elegant way to celebrate winter by the bowlful. **By Emily Saladino**

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Pitcher Perfect

I can't actually *recommend* beer pitchers. Knowing what they do to the liquid's aroma, flavor, carbonation, and visual appeal, they're near the bottom in terms of serving vessels an expert would suggest. In that hierarchy, they're somewhere between beer bong and a 5-gallon Home Depot bucket.

And yet.

When I consider the cultural place that beer occupies in the U.S., beer pitchers make my heart swell. At my go-to sports bar, I order them more often than not. Yes, they're plastic. Yes, that plastic is often a little worse for wear. Yes, it's perfect.

Pitchers deliver beer at its sensory worst, but at its social best. Pitchers are shared containers. As the U.S. increasingly becomes an at-home drinking society—industry analysts believe only 15 percent of beer consumed in the U.S. last year was served at bars and restaurants—pitchers remain a bulwark of communal, shared conviviality. They exist squarely in the realm of the dive bar, the bowling alley, the ungentrified corner pub, the sports bar that happens to serve a killer Buffalo wing special on game days. A can is by definition a single serving of a beer designed for one person. A pitcher is its spiritual opposite.

Ordering a beer pitcher means no one needs to say the bare minimum: "I'll have the same." In the era of decision fatigue and over-abundant drink options, a beer pitcher gives an entire group permission to defer. Someone already ordered for you. It's taken care of. Grab a frosty pint glass and dig in. Don't worry about it—we'll split the tab evenly later.

This frees not just time but mental energy. The minutes my friends and I would spend scanning a menu or craning our necks to discern what bottles are in the fridge behind the bar can now be better spent catching up. When we get together at bars, someone is always just arriving or just leaving. Time is precious. The beer pitcher means

everyone can grab a glass, pour from the common well, and get down to the business of spending time together.

I do want to acknowledge the objections—the same ones I raised at the jump. Pitchers will not present beer at its best. The beer risks going flat, getting warm, losing

its aromatics. As a person who cares deeply about beer quality, I see the red flags. In this instance, I don't care; beer pitcher moments are not pedantic moments. Despite their flaws, pitchers also contain the solution: If you're worried about beer losing carbonation or warming up, best to get another person to join the group so that you can finish that pitcher faster. Voilà—problem solved. Not to veer into overly philosophical territory, but the pitcher reminds us that there is joy in inviting others to share a common cup, to find ourselves on equal footing with our companions. The pitcher loves all, serves all.

Our contemporary U.S. beverage landscape is deeply individualized. What we order reflects not just a personal palate but is intended to say something about us: the degree of

sophistication we want to project, our familiarity with craft beer, our experience with other cultures' cocktail traditions, even how much we're comfortable spending. A pitcher, even more than its cousin the beer bucket (also worthy of re-appreciation), levels the playing field.

A beer pitcher is not the appropriate choice every time. It's not even an option at most bars. But in the right place, with the right people, and the right song on the jukebox, you can't convince me there's a more sublime vessel.

By Kate Bernot





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