

Robert Wattie
serves it forth.

Trendspotting Cocktail Confidential

IN RECENT YEARS, A SMALL group of innovative bartenders has risen to the top shelf of cocktail culture. Working at stylish new bars—places without neon or velvet ropes, where connoisseurship replaces trendiness—they can be found crafting drinks that are equal parts heady libation and epicurean delight. On the following pages, meet five experts who have elevated the cocktail to an art form, and in the process reinvented the way we drink. BY J. GABRIEL BOYLAN

Robert Wattie

*The Lobby Bar at One Aldwych, London, U.K.;
The Goodwood Park Hotel, West Sussex, U.K.*

Raising the Bar Wattie takes inspiration from a 1950s cocktail book that his grandfather gave him, but also likes of-the-moment ingredients such as homemade flavored syrups and his own lavender-infused vodka.

Star Turn Wattie created the drinks menu at the smart, elegant Lobby Bar at One Aldwych. He was recently promoted to food and beverage manager at Ald-

wych's sister hotel, The Goodwood Park Hotel in West Sussex.

Fresh Direct A veteran of restaurant kitchens, Wattie takes a chef's approach to drinks: "When I changed the menu [at Lobby Bar], I took my team to Borough Market for inspiration. Trying new fruits and spices will help drinks."

Take Away "Small characteristics give your cocktails shape," Wattie says. "Rather than just loading on sugar, a really great ginger beer will add subtle sweetness plus the bite of ginger."

The Lobby Bar, One Aldwych, London, U.K., onealdwych.com;

The Goodwood Park Hotel Chichester, West Sussex, U.K., thegoodwoodparkhotel.co.uk

TANYA HABLOUJA/THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX

WHAT TO DRINK AROUND THE WORLD **New York City** Manhattan whiskey, sweet vermouth, bitters **Paris** Sidecar brandy or cognac, Cointreau, lemon juice >>

Lucy Brennan

Mint and 820, Portland, OR

Raising the Bar A student of the classics (and by that we mean pre-Prohibition cocktails like the Tom Collins), Brennan searches for inspiration in vintage bartending books. Her updates include the Hot & Sour, a Whiskey Sour fired up with a spicy kiss of Tabasco.

Star Turn Brennan's unconventional use of produce (her signature drink is the Avocado Daiquiri) has put her on more than a few top bartender lists (*Food & Wine*, *Bon Appétit*, *Playboy.com*) and she recently released her first book, *Hip Sips* (Chronicle).

Forewarned is Forearmed Reservations are not required at the starkly lit, brick-walled 820 (adjacent to her restaurant, Mint), but expect a wait, as it's still the standard-bearer for Portland's cocktail renaissance.

Take Away "A cocktail should be balanced and complex but only have four or five ingredients," she

says. She recommends experimenting with fruits or herbs.

Mint and 820 816 & 820 N. Russell St., Portland, OR; 503/284-5518

Avocado Daiquiri

- 2 oz silver rum
- 2 oz gold rum
- 1/4 medium-ripe avocado, peeled and pitted
- 1/2 oz half-and-half
 - 1/4 oz fresh lemon-lime juice
 - 2 oz simple syrup
 - 1 1/2 cups ice cubes
 - pomegranate concentrate (garnish)



In blender, combine rums, avocado, half-and-half, lemon-lime juice, and simple syrup. Add ice and blend 20–30 seconds. Serve in wine glass with pomegranate zigzag on top.



Kevin Armstrong

The Match Bar Group, London

Raising the Bar Armstrong, the head bartender for the family of Match Bars, keeps menus simple, updating classic recipes with an eye toward new products. Yet he uses artisanal elements like small batch mixers or organic produce sparingly, to up the flavor rather than just the cost of his drinks.

Star Turn The Match Bars got started in the late '90s, with Armstrong designing the menus at each new outpost. He even finds time to compete in the occasional bartending competition (last year he won the 42Below Cocktail World Cup).

Born to Rum "Are bartenders artists? No. Is bartending an art? Almost definitely," he says. "Good bartenders don't necessarily have tangible qualities; a good drink just sings to you when you drink it."

Take Away Armstrong contends that making your own simple syrups (one part boiled water with two parts sugar) allows for greater control over sweetness and the intensity of flavoring, something that a store-bought syrup or sour mix could never provide.

Match Bar 37-38 Margaret St., London; 44/20-7499-3443; Soshos 2 Tabernacle St., London; 44/20-7920-0701; Milk & Honey London 61 Poland St., London; 44/70-00-655469

Sosho Cooler

- 1 oz Finlandia mango vodka
- 3 red grapes, muddled
- 1/2 oz fresh lemon juice
 - 2/3 oz simple syrup
 - 1 1/3 oz cloudy apple juice
 - 2 1/3 oz crisp white wine (sauvignon blanc)
 - dash of passion fruit syrup



Shake all ingredients, strain, and serve very long over cubed ice. Garnish with an apple slice and a red grape.

CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT: BASIL CHILLERS (2); COURTESY OF MATCH BAR GROUP (2)



Audrey Saunders

Pegu Club, New York City

Raising the Bar Among the top cocktail destinations worldwide, Pegu Club's mellow, darkly lit atmosphere featuring a super-long bar, low-slung seating, and subtly Asian-inspired detailing lends itself to serious libation contemplation. Saunders' creations (documented in several books) shun the use of "exotic purees and oddball ingredients" unless absolutely necessary. Instead, she prefers streamlined flavors unmuddled by overt sweetness and pungency.

Star Turn Saunders managed Bemelmans bar in New York City for three years prior to running Pegu Club, and has had two week-long bartending residencies at the Ritz London.

Flavor of the Year "Drinks like the Daiquiri, the Manhattan, the Sour, the Sidecar, the Old-Fashioned—these drinks only have three ingredients and are a true test of a bartender's skill. You can't hide behind them," she says. "I evaluate the spirit I'm using, then work with ingredients that have an affinity with the base spirit (and each other), and see if the sum of those ingredients can produce a unique flavor."

Take Away Saunders loves "single note" concentrates in vodka. Infuse spices like cinnamon, clove, or pepper in vodka for three days, then store in individual dasher bottles for use as a "liquid spice rack."

Pegu Club 77 W. Houston St., 2nd floor, New York City; 212/473-7348

Todd Smith

Bourbon & Branch, San Francisco

Raising the Bar Bourbon & Branch's speakeasy attitude (reservations required; no walk-ins permitted at the main bar) is a page out of the Prohibition era, but Smith makes sure B&B is fully up to date, with about 15 house-made bitters and syrups like saffron and ginger.

The Vibe Its brick walls are dimly lit by antique chandeliers hung

from a stamped-tin ceiling. B&B's house rules, posted in the bar, include "no name-dropping."

Back to the Future "The whole idea with Bourbon & Branch was to bring back the feel of drinks from Prohibition and pre-Prohibition," he says. "The drinks were better then, meant to be sipped and enjoyed."

Take Away Smith recommends taking a look at vintage cocktail books for simple tips, forgotten recipes, and inspiration.

Bourbon & Branch 501 Jones St., San Francisco; 415/673-1921



DRINK ME

UNDER-THE-RADAR SPIRITS

AGAVEVERO

(Jalisco, Mexico) Robert Wattie likes this liqueur, which is sweeter than tequila and smoother on the palate.

CLASE AZUL REPOSADO TEQUILA

(Jalisco, Mexico) Lucy Brennan's favorite tequila is extra-smooth and comes in hand-painted ceramic bottles.

GIN NO. 209

(San Francisco) Brennan calls this very clean gin, produced by Leslie Rudd (Dean & DeLuca), "gorgeous and sexy!"

PIERRE FERRAND AMBRE COGNAC

(Cognac, France) Kevin Armstrong recommends this floral, tannic cognac as a good value and a "soft, rich" drink.

APEROL

(Padua, Italy) Todd Smith adores this "baby Campari," an orange aperitif often served with soda and orange slice.

SUZE

(Thuir, France) Audrey Saunders admits this gentian aperitif tastes a bit "medicinal." Well, the French love it!



MIX IT UP

Find more of these easy, fun drink recipes from

the rest of our favorite bar stars on our website at ShermansTravel.com/Cocktails.