

best of  
2009

## A Drink to Remember

Next time you're imbibing, request a classic cocktail at one of these vintage-inspired speak-easies

BY JENNY ADAMS

At the Gibson they serve two kinds of Rickeys: the standard gin and the more obscure bourbon Rickey.

Part tenders, part performers, armed with a sense of style in both dress and demeanor, the ladies and gentlemen of the high-proof profession are once again mixing your grandfather's libations, from Sazeracs to Manhattans, Aviations to Alexanders. This vintage resurgence is restoring proper etiquette to bartending, and it's refreshing that ordering the earliest cocktails is now the latest fashion. Here are a few suggestions for drinking the classics born in the Northeast. After all, it adds a dash of character to the drinking experience to seek out and sip a cocktail in the city it calls home.

**Est. 2009**  
**gin Rickey**  
**Washington, D.C.**

Before there was air conditioning, there was a gin Rickey. But most people don't realize that before there was a gin Rickey, there was the bourbon Rickey. The common classic's predecessor began at a bar called Shoomaker's.

Politicos would pound the pavement from the capitol to the bar, where famed barkeep George Williamson held the tonic for heat exhaustion in spirits both clear and cloudy. In 1883, regular Shoomaker's customer Col. Joe Rickey sauntered in, high on political victory and hungover from celebrating. His regular call was a slug of bourbon over ice, topped with soda water. This particular morning, Williamson had a rare selection of West Indian limes from Jamaica. He squeezed one into a glass and dropped in the shell before adding Rickey's usual, and the bourbon Rickey was born. The more common substitute of gin soon followed, bringing an entire category of cocktails to life.

Seek out Derek Brown at the Gibson on U Street N.W. for either libation. He uses the more common Persian limes and specialty soda water for a splash of character.

**Est. 2009**  
**Ward 8**  
**Boston**

Classic cocktails are revered all over the Puritan City, from speak-easy-style taverns to posh, modern lounges. The Boston chapter of Ladies United for the Preservation of Endangered Cocktails (LUPEC) is one of the largest and most active in the country, serving civic organizations and a mean version of the Boston classic, the Ward 8 cocktail.

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“Although there are several cocktails with *Boston* in the name, their place of origin and history are tenuous at best,” says Misty Kalkofen, acclaimed bartender and president of LUPEC’s Boston chapter. “We know for certain that the Ward 8 was created at the Locke-Ober restaurant in honor of the political victory of Michael Lomasney in 1898.”

Today, you can visit Kalkofen behind the stick at Drink on Congress Street. “We have had a lot of calls for the Ward 8 in the last months,” Kalkofen says. “If you like a whiskey sour, we might suggest it.”

Inside of Drink, there are no flagons on the back bar, just an assortment of pitchers and punch bowls. There is no drink menu, either. The idea is to chat with the staff about your tastes and let them make a suggestion.

“The concept is like having a cocktail party every night,” Kalkofen says. For her Ward 8, she uses Old Overholt rye whiskey, lemon juice, simple syrup, Angostura orange bitters and a house-made grenadine.

**Best of 2009**  
**Fish House Punch**  
**Philadelphia**

In the early 1700s, there was a gentlemen’s society known as the Schuylkill Fishing Company of Pennsylvania. The men gathered in their “fish house” to escape life’s frustrations, and because imbibing was a key component of their

gatherings, it didn’t take long for a signature punch to be developed. The Fish House Punch—lemon juice, sugar, peach brandy, cognac and Jamaican rum—was concocted in 1732 and was served over a large ice block in a fishbowl.

Most modern bars don’t mess around with punches, but Apothecary, on South 13th Street, has an outstanding Fish House formula. They build it over a funnel filled with ice and placed into an empty 750-milliliter bottle.

“The way we serve it harkens back to the late 1800s, when people would go to a pub and, instead of buying a bottle of rum, would buy a bottle of premade punch like we might pick up a six-pack or bottle of wine,” says Preston Eckman, Apothecary’s bar manager.

One bottle serves six cocktails, and Apothecary’s recipe uses Gosling’s Black Seal rum, Asbach Uralt brandy, crème de pêche, black tea, lemon juice, water and powdered sugar.

**Best of 2009**  
**Waldorf**  
**New York City**

A combination of rye whiskey, absinthe, bitters and sweet vermouth, the Waldorf is basically an absinthe Manhattan, and a good one, like revenge, is best served cold. The earliest recipe for it appears in *The Old Waldorf-Astoria Bar Book* by A.S. Crockett. Crockett was the historian of the Waldorf Hotel when it was on the

corner of Fifth Avenue and 33rd Street. Address sound familiar? It is now the location of the Empire State building. The hotel was demolished to build the skyscraper, but because America was in the throes of Prohibition when the Empire State building was erected, there was no bar added inside.

Thanks to the re-legalization of absinthe in 2007, the Waldorf cocktail is popping back up on bar menus. Venture inside Bookmarks Lounge at the Library Hotel on Madison Avenue and befriend mixologist Jonathan Pogash. His Waldorf includes Rittenhouse rye and a squeeze of orange peel on the top to create an extra olfactory kick. ☞



## The Cock’s Tail?

Historical accuracy plays a peculiar role in a bar setting. Most likely a result of consuming while retelling, multiple legends about the birthplace of the cocktail have evolved over the years. Many claim it originated early in the 19th century, when New Orleans pharmacist Antoine Amédée Peychaud began adding his Peychaud’s Bitters to cognac in an egg cup called a *coquetier*, pronounced “cock-tyay.” The numbed tongue is blamed for the advent of the term *cocktail*. Another, more colorful, less believable version has the word *cocktail* arising because a cock’s tail was a popular garnish for early drinks. No one has found the slightest splash of truth in that theory, however.

Apothecary’s Fish House Punch

