

Proof Positive

DC cocktailians mix it up for World Cocktail Week

In May, guests all over the world paid homage to the illustrious cocktail at spirited events to benefit New Orleans' Museum of the American Cocktail. In Washington, DC, eleven of the city's most innovative mixologists came together for the second year at the aptly-named Proof restaurant to serve up concoctions paired with the cuisine of Chef Haidar Karoum.

The evening's mixers and shakers belong to the DC Craft Bartenders Guild, which promotes and educates consumers throughout the metro area. "Our mission is to ensure that bartending in the DC area is treated as a serious profession by our patrons, employers and colleagues," explains Guild President (and bartender at Bourbon) Owen Thomson. To that end, guests at Proof had the chance to sample five beverages during the cocktail hour, with an additional eight served during the five-course dinner.

Justin Guthrie, who recently helped create the historically-focused bar menu at recently-opened Blue Ridge, demonstrated an old-time approach to tipples with his Cucumber Gin Milk Punch. In colonial times, deliberately curdled milk was mixed with spirits and citrus, rendering a thin and creamy liquid that kept for weeks without refrigeration. Guthrie's refreshing modern take used cucumber- and rose-scented Hendrick's gin along with milk, and lime and cucumber juices.

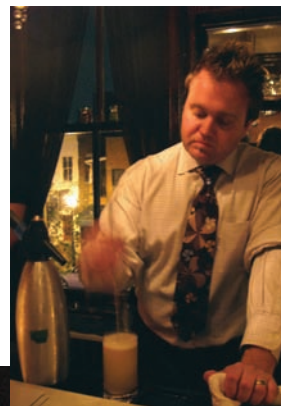
Inspired by the cuisine of boss José Andrés, Café Atlántico's Jill Zimorski's Horchata de Los Sanluqueños employed Manzanilla sherry and Marcona almond orgeat. The drink got its kick from citrus vodka, and the addition of fresh cantaloupe juice and a vanilla and bacon salt rim gave a nod to the popular tapas dish Serrano-wrapped melon.

For his SebastGIN, resident sommelier and cocktail wizard Sebastian Zutant in-

fused vodka with botanicals including citrus, rosemary, coriander and sage. His Eyeball Kid cocktail featured the namesake spirit as well as falernum, housemade rhubarb bitters and an apple cider shrub; the puckery potable partnered effortlessly with Chef Karoum's abalone-based "Three Minute Ceviche."

A trio of mini-cocktails by Todd Thrasher of Alexandria's Restaurant Eve and PX accompanied a selection of artisanal cheeses. He mixed a beet shrub with Rhum Clément VSOP, honey-roasted orange juice and Clément Créole Shrub for the earthy and strikingly purple Alice and Vincent (sublime with the sliver of ashen goat cheese), tamed smoky bourbon with pecans for the Sweet Meat and blended gin with strawberries and Lillet for the easily quaffable Early Girl V. 2.0.

The original meaning of "cocktail," printed in the May 13, 1806 issue of *The Balance and Columbian Repository*, was "a stimulating liquor composed of spirits of any kind, sugar, water, and bitters." At the DC event, the city's stars behind the bar appreciatively strayed from that strict definition. Thirteen liquid tastes and five courses later, guests saw undisputed proof and more than a peek of what's worthy of the city's shakers. ■■



PHOTOS: JILL ZIMORSKI

Todd Thrasher



DC bartenders mix it up at Proof.