Two New Books, Two Great Bars, And Two Rising Stars

With 2007 coming to a close, there are many reasons to celebrate the vibrant and growing mixology movement as well as remember some of its greatest pioneers.

by Dale DeGroff

Big goings-on have been taking place at the close of 2007, but first I have to acknowledge the passing of two industry giants. We lost Michael Jackson, a.k.a. beerhunter, whisky expert, author of numerous whisky and beer books and, finally, dear friend. Michael guided me on a pub tour of his London neighborhood that ended with a Tandoori dinner and at each stop his appearance elicited a warm greeting from even the most jaded of pub scrubs. Life was better for that day.

In Los Angeles this year, we lost one of the shrinking fraternity of bartenders whose career spanned the decades from World War II to the present. Charles Chop was one of the original members of the United States Bartenders Guild and vice president of the International Bartenders Association (IBA) for twenty years. Chop was a recipient of the Angelo Zola International Prize, the highest honor awarded to a bartender by the international guild. Charles was also the first recipient of the coveted Bartender Hall of Fame ring presented over the years by Bartender magazine to outstanding professionals. Charles lived to see the Guild spread to five cities from Los Angeles and it continues to grow as young bartenders embrace the profession again.

The Center of the Universe
How great is New York? I grabbed a “flight” to New Orleans the other night and never left my bar stool, courtesy of Julie Reiner’s daily cocktail flight at Flatiron Lounge. I ordered a sumptuous trio of New Orleans classics called Flight to New Orleans — her Vieux Carré, Hurricane and her original, the New Orleans Buck — all splendid examples of preparing great classic recipes exactly as they should be, with fresh top quality ingredients, balanced to perfection, and not too sweet.

Soon, I was back at Flatiron Lounge for a party hosted by Perigee Books for the release of Imbibe by David Wondrich, a historical tour de force based on How to Mix Drinks, the seminal work by Jerry Thomas, the father of the bartending profession. John Hodgman, author of Areas of My Expertise gives us a great description of David: “Brilliant historian, beautiful writer, former punk rocker, absinthe maker, mixological marvel, and perhaps, yes, even wizard.”

David gathered a group of friends at Flatiron who recreated drinks from Thomas’ book. Robert “Drinkboy” Hess made Japanese cocktails, paired with Toby Cecchini’s (owner of Passerby) perfect Gin Daisies (think 19th century Tom Collins). Audrey Saunders (of Pegu Club) and I rounded out the evening with Blue Blazers and Tom & Jerry’s. Then we headed to Toby’s joint — which is truly a joint in the warmest invocation of that word — for collards, dirty rice and ribs. Toby brought a bucket into the back gallery room and crafted a Fish House Punch on the spot.

A Rising Star
I won’t be the first and certainly not the last to pay tribute to a huge emerging talent in the bar business, Junior Merino. My wife Jill and I headed to Rayuela to celebrate our anniversary where we were greeted by him. Junior has been living in New York since he was 16, but grew up in Mexico and was exposed to different varieties of spices, fruits, and vegetables which greatly influenced his unique style in mixing & matching uncommon ingredients. Junior, a certified sommelier from the American Sommelier As-
Here are a few of the cocktails I stumbled over — I mean, that I enjoyed — in my latest Big Apple wanderings.

**WHOA NELLIE**
From *In the Land of Cocktails* by Ti Adelaide Martin and Lally Brennan of Commander’s Palace

1 1/4 ounces of Sazerac Rye
3/4 ounce of Myers’s Dark Rum
3/4 ounce of Cointreau
4 dashes of Angostura Bitters
1/2 ounce Fresh Lemon Juice
1/2 ounce Fresh Grapefruit Juice
1/2 ounce Simple Syrup

Fill a martini glass with ice and set aside to chill. Combine all ingredients in a cocktail shaker with ice and shake vigorously. Discard the ice from the glass. Strain the drink into the glass and serve immediately.

**JAPANESE COCKTAIL**
Adapted from Imbibe by David Wondrich

1 tablespoon of Orgeat Syrup
1/2 teaspoon Bogart’s Bitters (use Angostura Aromatic Bitters)
2 ounces VS Cognac

A piece of Lemon Peel

**COMING UP ROSES**
Adapted from *In the Land of Cocktails* by Ti Adelaide Martin and Lally Brennan of Commander’s Palace

1 1/2 ounces Scorpion Mezcal Blanco
3/4 ounce Cointreau
1/2 ounce Monin Ginger Syrup
1/2 ounce Monin Rose Syrup

Muddle the first four ingredients in a mixing glass. Add the Bacardi Razz, ice, and shake. Add the Champagne into the highball before serving the drink. Pour the drink into the highball glass with the Champagne.

**COCTAIL CORNER**
continued

sociation, is everywhere. He is working on three cocktail menus, planning a bartending school in Mexico City, giving instruction and presentations weekly, and working with many different spirits suppliers. He is serving up some extraordinary original cocktails like his Caliente (Partida tequila, ginger, Pimms, agave and lime). Junior is working with different combinations of edible flowers, teas, exotic fruits, unusual sweeteners like linden honey and Damiana liqueur. He gave me a Mezcal drink that combined ginger, pineapple, Cointreau and jicama of all things (my first time finding that ingredient in a cocktail), which was a perfect foil for the smokey Maria Mezcal.

**Celebrating the Big Easy**
Next stop was the penthouse of Jackie and Mike Bezos, who were kind enough to host a small party celebrating the new book by Ti Adelaide Martin and Lally Brennan, proprietors of Commander’s Palace and Café Adelaide, *In the Land of Cocktails*. As Ti Adelaide pointed out, “It’s all part of bringing the fun back to New Orleans, but with serious cocktails!” And this was aptly demonstrated by New Orleans mixologist Lu Brow who came to New York with Ti and Lally to make cocktails from the book. In addition to top notch Sazeracs and Ramos Fizzes (replete with a line of “shaker boys”), we were also treated to original drinks from the book like the Tequila Mockingbird. Lu Brow is another success story; like Junior, she found herself intrigued by the process of mixology and has been making a name for herself and reaching a wide audience.