

February 2018

THE BARS AND NIGHTLIFE ISSUE

COCKTAILS FOR CONNOISSEURS (AND NORMAL DRINKERS)
THE WAR AGAINST LAST CALL
A SMUT HOUSE GOES DOWN SWINGING
S.F.'S GREATEST ALL-NIGHT DOUGHNUT

San Francisco



\$4.99 February 2018
sanfrancmag.com
MODERN LUXURY

+ OUR 30 FAVORITE BARS
INCLUDING THE CITY'S HOTTEST
ROOFTOP: CHARMAINE'S

Circulation: 78,022

Outsourcing Is In

You know those clear, two-plus-inch ice cubes laboriously cut down from giant sculpture blocks, usually onsite at the bar with a variety of power tools? They're a pain in the glass. Between ice cutting and other prep work like squeezing citrus juice, making syrups, and assembling batches and infusions, it's amazing that bartenders aren't exhausted by the time their bars open at 5 p.m. That's why two new companies are helping to curtail all the prep. **Blind Tiger Ice**, a spin-off of Portland's PDX Ice, has set up shop in San Mateo to cut up those big soxy cubes, spheres, spears, and

other chunks of ice engraved with custom logos and deliver them to bars in the city and the South Bay at reasonable-enough rates. At the same time, the founders of **Super Jugoso** (coincidentally, also a Portland spin-off) figured out how to legally squeeze citrus juice and deliver it unpasteurized to bars, along with a choice of more than 50 syrups. Super Jugoso has signed on bars including **Bellota** and **Hard Water**, whose bar managers both sing the praises of the syrups; at **Nopalito**, bar manager Yanni Kehagiaris is more interested in lime juice for the margaritas (\$12). The Proper Hotel

buys both juice and syrups for its lobby restaurant, **Villon**, and rooftop bar, **Charmaine's**. Kehagiaris says that using the service will not only allow his bartenders to spend less time prepping and juicing when they could be serving customers: It may also reduce repetitive motion injuries. Plus, he says, the delivered product actually tastes better than the rotary-juicer-squeezed lime juice they had been prepping onsite. These services should be invisible to drinkers, but your favorite local bartenders may start out their shifts a lot happier.

Custom-crafted ice cubes from San Mateo's Blind Tiger Ice.

The Mission Has Only Just Begun

In terms of quantity, the Mission district has never been underserved for drinking venues. Quality, on the other hand, has been a bit more elusive. But recent months have brought us a critical mass of haute cocktail bars and restaurants. **Obispo** promises to be a tiki-phobic cocktail bar serving "rum classics from our favorite books," according to owner Thad Vogler. **True Laurel**, from the Lazy Bear team, features a cocktail tasting bar (like a chef's table) with bar director Nicolas Torres strutting his stuff. **The Beehive**, in the former Range restaurant on Valencia, will be adding a second bar and mid-century-style cocktail lounge serving 1960s-influenced food and "playful" cocktails to wash down all the fondue. A couple blocks down, **Bon Voyage!** taking the former home of Slanted Door and Wo Hing General Store, is the second stand-alone cocktail bar from Trick Dog's Bon Vivants. Closer to Potrero, **Tartine Manufactory** announced that its new liquor license would be put to good use by L.A. star cocktail consultant Julian Cox. Add these new venues to **Trick Dog**, **Beretta**, **Loló**, **Wildhawk**, the **Hideout at Dalva**, and **ABV**, and the Mission has become the best drinking neighborhood in the city. But for quality this time around. ■




Four of the inventive drinks at True Laurel. From left, the Quinine Cobbler, the Bee Brusch, the Champ for the Boulevard, and the Prata Tat.



YOUR COUSIN FROM PORTLAND

Graffiti, tattoos, and the Thermals on the jukebox: Your northwesterner friend will feel right at home. —Kelsey Lannin

THE RUBY ROOM

True to the name, glowing ruby lights illuminate everything inside this cave of a bar, tucked away a block from Lake Merritt. The *Easy Rider* vibes are heavy—thanks to co-owner Trevor Latham, founder of the motorcycle and fight club the East Bay Rats—but not in a scary way. You won't have trouble finding a dance partner at honky-tonk night or an opponent for a round of pool, but because of the indoor smoking room you will have trouble doing either of those things and leaving without feeling like you've just chain-smoked an entire pack. 132 14TH ST. (AT MADISON ST.) OAKLAND \$   

EDINBURGH CASTLE PUB

Not for the faint of heart, this Tenderloin dive's dance parties, like *Function*, feature actual DJs spinning actual records, attracting fans of "rap music at high volumes on shitty speakers and lots of people sweating." [Or so says that event's flyer.] The more mellow—but still very sweaty—shindig *Heat Wave* coincides with the neighborhood's Lower Polk Art Walk every first Thursday. Added bonus: The sticky layers of spilled drinks dry fast on the hot dance floor, providing extra traction. 960 GEARY ST. (NEAR POLK ST.) \$   

THE GOLDEN BULL

Lots of gold and a healthy number of bulls here, but the more fitting mascot watches from a black velvet

painting perched above the bar. With an over-the-shoulder glance, an unsmiling woman with long black hair establishes a matriarchal tone. Reinforcing this: a refreshing flip of the typical men-to-women ratio and a recent event poster advertising an Aural History of Femme Punk DJ set and Christey's Cool Cat Karaoke. Order a greyhound with fresh grapefruit [\$7] and discuss dismantling the patriarchy, or what you'll bring to the bar's weekend "not your mother's" rummage sale. 412 14TH ST. (NEAR BROADWAY) OAKLAND \$   

BEAUTY BAR

Though it's one of seven locations, this hair-salon-themed chain is John Waters's *Female Trouble* in bar form. With its exteriors done up in pastel spray paint by local artist Deb, it fits right into the mural-heavy Mission. The "beauty saloon" offers a manicure-and-martini happy hour, where you can spruce up before hitting the nearly always packed dance floor in your best cha-cha heels. 2299 MISSION ST. (AT 19TH ST.) \$\$   

THE DEN

Unless you're waiting for a table at the attached WesBurger 'n' More or the adjacent Mission Chinese, it's easy to overlook this itty-bitty tiki bar reminiscent of your parents' basement. Its limited seating and high customer turnover make the Den less a den and more a very festive elevator—the entire bar is just 100 square feet—decked out with plastic ferns, year-round Christmas lights, and a spinning disco ball that bedazzles everything in sight. If you're looking to meet people and don't mind standing while you sip, you're in luck—the constant flow of new faces and close quarters make mingling with strangers both easy and impossible to avoid. 2240A MISSION ST. (NEAR 18TH ST.) \$   



YOUR NEW YORK INVESTMENT BANKER BRO

Drinking in swank hotels is back again, in San Francisco as in Gotham. —Scott Lucas

CHARMAINE'S AT THE PROPER




The new jewel of Mid-Market is the Proper Hotel and its rooftop bar, Charmaine's. Poured 120 feet above street level, the adventurous cocktails include the Proper Cup [\$16], made with Pimm's, gin, cucumber, blackberry, citrus, ginger ale, and black pepper. Even though the drinks are often too precious named—the debut menu included the Christmas & the Beads of Sweat and the Let Me Touch Your Mind—they're as inventive as they come. Plan ahead, though: Entry lines can stretch up to an hour at peak times. 1100 MARKET ST. (AT MCALLISTER ST.) \$\$\$   

CHAMBERS AT THE PHOENIX

This updated motel in the Tenderloin cultivates a rock star vibe—the last pool party we went to there featured a couple guys from the Grateful Dead jamming with Michael Franti. With that soundtrack, we'd be equally happy with the Supa Jean (vodka, vermouth, watermelon, and sea salt, topped with champagne; \$15) or cheap beer in a plastic cup. 601 EDDY ST. (NEAR LARKIN ST.) \$\$\$   

LIBRARY BAR AT HOTEL REX

Smarten up at this bar and cabaret near Union Square that features live performances on the weekends by Society Cabaret. Or, if you need a low-key wind-down, order a classic cocktail like a martini [\$11] or a lemon drop [\$12] and avail yourself of one of the many books lining the shelves. If you're still mourning the closure of Two Sisters Bar and

Books, it's the next best thing. 562 SUTTER ST. (NEAR MASON ST.) \$\$   

THE LIVING ROOM AT THE W

While the second-floor bar at the W is under renovation, talk disruption with your business bros at the Living Room, a slick bar on the ground floor with cocktails like [fittingly] the Disruptor [\$16], made with tequila, guava purée, and honey collected from hives on the roof of the building. House music, swirling lights, and a mural with one fist tattooed "Love" and the other "Haight" lend a nightclub ambience, while fireside seating and a Ms. Pac-Man arcade game offer touches of relaxed whimsy. Don't miss the Insta-ready pair of wings at the entrance. 181 3RD ST. (AT HOWARD ST.) \$\$\$   

DIRTY HABIT AT ZELOS

Featuring dark-wood designs, a hip-hop soundtrack, and inventive cocktails like the Espresso Machine (Wahaka espadin, coffee, Highland Park Magnus, Suze biters, and agave; \$15), Dirty Habit puts the hotel in hotel bar: It shares the fifth floor of Hotel Zelos with a row of guest rooms. Make new friends over giant multi-person crystal bowls filled with punch like the Shiso Pretty [\$60], made with Capurro pisco acholado, fino sherry, lemon juice, tangerine, and shiso leaves, topped with prosecco. Recently overheard, one woman cheering another up: "A good Manhattan will get you ready for a hustling, bustling city." Indeed. 12 4TH ST. (AT MARKET ST.) \$\$\$   