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DINING

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SIP AND STUDY

COCKTAIL CLASS IS IN SESSION AT ARTBAR AND BEYOND

What's that old quote? "Mix a man a cocktail, and you'll get him buzzed for the evening; teach a man to mix his own, and you'll keep him tipping for a lifetime." (I think it's in the Bible or something.) That's the idea behind a slew of cocktail classes popping up around the city this year, like the new monthly series at the recently revamped **ArtBar** (40 Edwin Land Boulevard, Cambridge, 617.806.4122). Having shifted the bar program's focus to craft cocktails, new food and beverage director Troy Clarke is leading \$20 classes on the third Thursday of the month. Each 6:30 p.m. session breaks down a big boozing topic for novices (think overviews of punches, American whiskeys, bitters, and more). Check out the full schedule of dates and topics at artbarcambridge.com, and read on to find out why Clarke has decided to quench thirsts for cocktail knowledge.

What are some of the major skills that people need to learn? I think that people don't know how to stir or shake. So we always start off with the basics: which cocktails should be stirred [versus] shaken and how to shake. . . . [Also], how to mix and balance. More alcohol doesn't mean a better drink. It's about following the recipe. I try to talk about it almost like baking. Make sure you're using the proper amount of ingredients so the drink is balanced.

What's the setup of the class? We limit it to 14 people so it can be

interactive and more intimate. We do a blind tasting, and then they make two drinks. As we're doing the blind tasting, we talk about the spirit category so they're learning at the same time. Then we go right into making the drinks so that I can be there to assist them. We keep it really affordable so it doesn't break the bank to come in. Two drinks are going to cost you \$20 anyway. I keep it to 45 to 60 minutes.

The class on February 16 is about American whiskey. What can we learn there? I'm going to break it down and talk about bourbon, rye, Tennessee whiskey, corn, and maybe blended whiskey or white whiskey. Right now I'm barrel-aging Bully Boy's white whiskey, doing a white Manhattan with Dolin Blanc and rhubarb in new charred American oak barrels. That would be the modern cocktail [we'll make]. Then we'll take a classic rye Manhattan and go back to 1874. . . . We're going to show classically what's different if you shake and taste the flavors, how aeration with bubbles completely changes the drink. We'll talk about how to taste liquor. A lot of people can taste wine but not spirits. You don't want to burn your nose hair off smelling things that are 100-proof.

Why are so many cocktail classes popping up? For me, I just want to share knowledge. I may have someone in my class who has more information than I do, but that's what I love about bartenders. We're not pretentious. It's more, "Let me give you my recipe; see if you can make it better. I didn't think of that." I created this class to show we're in the know at ArtBar and that our establishment is focusing on quality.

— Luke O'Neil

Got an idea for Liquid? Email lukeoneil47@gmail.com.

DRINK TANKS

A few more spots to find cocktail classes

The Boston Center for Adult Education (122 Arlington Street, Boston, 617.267.4430). The BCAE has an extensive line-up of spirit, wine, and beer classes, from Champagne-cocktail-making tutorials to a recent Art of the Cocktail class with Domingo-Martin Barreres of Market. Check the regularly updated schedule at bcae.org.

Local 149 (149 P Street, South Boston, 617.269.0900). At their 90-minute Mixology 101 sessions, bartenders Chris Olds and John Mayer have been discussing cocktail history, mixing techniques, and bar-tool tips. The next class, happening at 7 p.m. on February 28, moves on up to Mixology 201. Tickets are \$40 via ticketleap.com and include appetizers.

Waterline at the Boston Marriott Long Wharf (296 State Street, Boston, 617.227.3838). On the first Thursday of every other month, mixologist Mark Miner hosts Imbiber 101. At 6 p.m. on March 1, the series kickoff will get attendees working with Berkshire Mountain Distillers' gin, vodka, and whiskey. The cost is \$25 and includes bar bites; call ahead to RSVP.

Zócalo (35 Stanhope Street, Boston, 617.456.7849). On Wednesdays in February from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m., beverage manager Jennifer Harvey will feature a tutorial on each week's highlighted cocktail. For just the price of the drink itself, you'll learn the recipe and technique required to make it at home.