

Flatiron's scholarly mixologist

Bartender taking skills to competition

BY CASEY FELDMAN
Special to amNewYork

Damon Dyer, a bartender at the Flatiron Lounge in Manhattan, talks about cocktails the way a college professor discusses Shakespeare.

This almost scholarly pursuit of flavor led him to the Caribbean last year, where he spent two weeks studying traditional mojitos and daiquiris.

And Monday, it will take him to the island of St. Maarten, where he will compete in the 2009 Bartender of the Year competition, sponsored by Domaine de Canton, a ginger-infused Cognac.

Fifteen to 20 other bartenders will vie for the \$10,000 prize. Dyer is the only New Yorker.

Tell us about the competition.

They had 15 to 20 bartenders. They sent out a call for entries, so bartenders would just go online and put in their



Damon Dyer makes his Le Coupe de Jarnac Fizz. (ALOJEDA)

drink recipes and the judges narrowed it down.

What drink recipe did you enter?

It's called the Coupe de Jarnac Fizz. It's a spin on

a Ramos Gin Fizz. In my recipe, the sweetness of the Domaine de Canton is muted by the tartness of fresh lemon juice. The spicy rye whiskey and smooth Cognac provide

Le Coupe de Jarnac Fizz

Ingredients:

- 1¼ oz. Domaine de Canton Ginger Liqueur
- 1¼ oz. Rittenhouse Rye Whiskey
- ¾ oz. Pierre Ferrand Cognac
- 1 oz. fresh lemon juice
- ½ oz. heavy cream
- 3 dashes Peychaud's Bitters
- 1 bar spoon of cream of coconut

Directions:

1. Shake all ingredients, and strain into a highball glass.
2. Top with 1 oz. soda water, then with candied ginger and shredded coconut.



a solid foundation, and the coconut and ginger flavors float on top of it all. The egg white and cream make for a meringue-like effect, and a touch of soda water provides a lightening bit of effervescence. Top it all with a skewered piece of candied ginger and a pinch of toasted, shredded coconut.

How did you come up with your drink?

Lots of hours in the research and development lab. I was inspired by a dessert that I had enjoyed months before, a creme brulee that had ginger and coconut in it.

Why did you become a bartender?

Because it's great seeing what you do in the bar. You play with flavors in the very same way a cook does in the kitchen. I dig flavors.

What did you do before you become a bartender?

Screwed around, mostly. Waited tables, worked in marketing, did some time at various junior colleges all over California. I specialized in not being a good student. I'm going back to school, though, to Brooklyn College, to be a speech pathologist.

What's the worst part of bartending?

Aside from cleaning up someone's puke in the bathroom the other day, the hours. Wait, you probably shouldn't print that. I'm working late when my girlfriend works days.

HOBOKEN HOLIDAY

Hoboken, N.J., celebrates St. Patrick's Day a little earlier than the rest of the world. The city's parade and daylong party take place Saturday. Bars open at 11 a.m. and last through the night. Though almost all have a \$20 cover, we've found a handful of places that offer cheaper entry and other special deals.

Mulligan's Pub

159 First St., at Bloomfield St., 201-876-4101

\$10 to \$20 cover, bagpipes and dancers, free corned beef sandwiches.

Gaslight

400 Adams St., at Fourth St., 201-217-1400

\$15 cover for first 180 people, \$20 cover after, DJ all day.

The FarSide

531 Washington St., btwn Fifth and Sixth sts., 201-963-7677

\$10 cover.

McMahon's Brownstone Ale House

1034 Willow Ave., btwn 10th and 11th sts., 201-798-5650

\$10 cover, Willie Lynch Trio performing, free corned beef sandwiches and soda bread.

How to get there: the PATH train (\$1.75, panynj.info/path, 800-234-PATH) or the bus from the Port Authority (\$2.55, njtransit.com, 973-275-5555).

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