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Mixing & matching

Mixologists create seasonal drinks with local flavor

By MATTHEW MARIN

NATIONAL REPORT—Specialty cocktail menus have long offered an additional source of revenue to hotel bars. Similar to leading restaurants and bars, hotels have partnered with renowned mixologists and other specialists to concoct unique cocktails, craft beers and exotic nonalcoholic drinks. For the spring 2014 season, several hotels have shaken things up behind the bar, rolling out one-of-a-kind, seasonal drinks that reflect the property's location.

The Langham Hospitality Group, owner of luxury hotels in Europe and the U.S., turned to its leading mixologist Alex Kratena to create a signature drink for each of the company's hotels. Kratena, a bartender at The Langham, London, created a signature drink for The Langham Huntington, Pasadena; The Langham, Chicago; The Langham, Boston; and Langham Place, Fifth Avenue. The cocktail is inspired by the city in which the hotel is located, and will only be served at that specific hotel.

Achieving multiple awards in the cocktail and spirit categories at The Langham Huntington, Pasadena, Kratena has embarked on a mini-tour of the company's hotels in the U.S. to introduce a specially curated menu of four specialty cocktails. "I tried to look beyond the obvious—something beyond what people would expect me to find inspirational," said Kratena. "And I liked the idea of playing up that particular city's culture and history."

For The Langham Huntington, Pasadena, Kratena created a cocktail consisting of rose water and vetiver, inspired by the weather in Southern California and the roses from the city's famous Rose Bowl parade. For the Chicago hotel, the mixologist created a drink that pays homage to the city's history with ingredients such as port, sherry and Scotch, with rich chocolate, raspberry and citrus additions. The Boston property's drink shares similar ingredients to the company's London hotel, which includes aquavit, fino, citrus, cedarwood and a touch of bitters. And for New York City, he discovered an unlikely source.

"I thought of something that is iconic to the city, like graffiti, but that isn't a typical tourist attraction," said Kratena. "I specifically chose Lady Pink as the inspiration for the New York cocktail because she exhibits to me so many of the qualities I love about New York—fun, uninhibited expression and a rebellious spirit—all of which can be found in her graffiti. It has some unique components—fino, sherry, rhubarb, citrus, agave and bitter orange."

With the hopes of serving unique and seasonal cocktails inspired by Philadelphia's culture combined with warmth and flair, The Rittenhouse, owned by Hersh

Hospitality Trust, tasked expert mixologist Papi Hurtado with creating a menu of memorable drinks at the hotel's newly renovated Library Bar. With meticulous attention to detail, the mixologist created the bar's signature cocktails by reinventing classic drinks made with special ingredients and house-made bitters to make each cocktail distinct.

Philadelphia Flower Show at the Pennsylvania Convention Center in March 2014. The Flower Poem, a rounded cocktail with a silky texture, combines flowers and citrus, with a very dry finish that comes from sparkling wine. "There are over 30 varieties of flowers we use in the Flower Poem, all of which are organic and edible," he said. "They include Rose, Elderflower, Cherry Blossom, Angelica, Citrus Blossom and English Daisy—all very aromatic and aesthetically pleasing."

Hurtado, who has competed in global mixology competitions and won the Pernod Ricard Mixology competition in 2007 in England, further explained that cocktails are updated seasonally and the Library Bar introduces new concept cocktails for holidays and occasions. "We are inspired by exotic ingredients, exotic fruits, ingredients that are in-season and cocktail themes that are on-trend," he added.

Unique to the Burlington, VT area, Hotel

Vermont offers a new cocktail program inspired by local Vermont ingredients specifically for business travelers and meeting planners. The hotel's Juniper bar bills itself as Burlington's farm-to-bar destination, extending the tradition of Vermont's grown and locally crafted ingredients beyond

the table and onto the bar. The independent hotel has partnered with 11 local distillers, including Vermont Spirits, Whistle Pig and Smugglers Notch Distillers. All of the hotel's signature cocktails are based on specific Vermont liquors.

"Hotel Vermont is perfectly poised in Burlington, the ultimate mix of urban and rural," said Cameron Keitel, head bartender at Juniper. "The glitziest of cocktails hold court beside the most rustic of beers, and we can

pull on innovation and tradition to craft our drink lists. We like to keep our additions to cocktails minimal so it doesn't cloud the view of what we're highlighting."

Hotel Vermont's new mixology program is marketed to business travelers who can reserve a private meeting and allow attendees to partake in a cocktail class and sample creations on the 7,500-sq-ft. roof and garden terrace. Cocktail choices range from the Lake Champlain Cosmo, which incorporates Vermont white vodka, to the Queen City Quencher, which blends local flavors like Vermont gold vodka, maple sapling, apple cider, white wine and cinnamon.

"Our target guest is anyone who recognizes and cherishes the fruits of hard work and quality craft," said Keitel. "Vermont spirits know comfort, and they know how to be inventive in achieving that comfort. It's at the same time recognizable and unique. For us, any drink should illicit intention and reflection." **HB**



Clockwise from top: As head bartender of Artesian bar at The Langham, London, Alex Kratena created signature drinks for The Langham's U.S. hotels.

Vermont mixologists have developed a new cocktail program inspired by local ingredients for Hotel Vermont's Juniper bar.

Papi Hurtado, master mixologist for the new Library Bar at The Rittenhouse, has become an active member of the city's bar scene and mixology community.

"We aim to create a full-sensory cocktail experience with expert craftsmanship, knowledge of the products, and innovation that brings guests back to see us perform," said Hurtado. "It's about the small details that bring perfect balance to our cocktail and beverage program."

The Library Bar offers an extensive mixology list that includes drinks inspired by local events. Most recently, Hurtado crafted a drink influenced by the