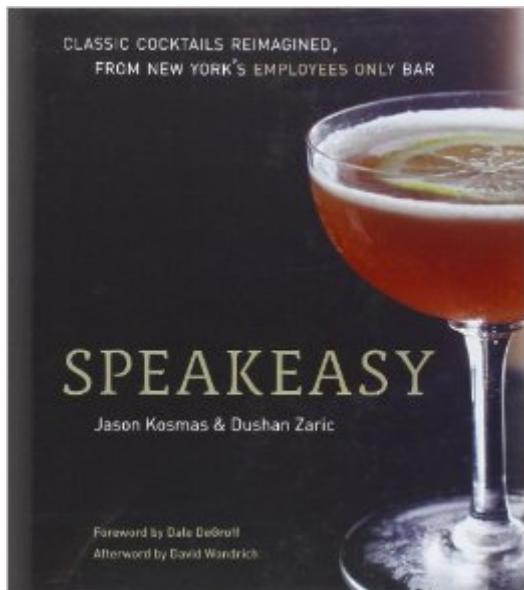


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Speakeasy: The Employees Only Guide To Classic Cocktails Reimagined



Synopsis

Time-honored cocktails like the New York Sour and the Sidecar were born during the era of Prohibition, the blessedly bygone social experiment that turned drinking into an underground adventure. In those days, hard beverage options were usually made with homemade hooch and flavorings of dubious origin and quality.Â Â Â Â Thankfully, a cocktail renaissance has emerged in many of todayâ™s bars, where inventive drinks showcase both the artistry and craft of bartending. At their moody and atmospheric West Village bar-restaurant Employees Only, master mixologists Jason Kosmas and Dushan Zaric can regale you with colorful tales of cocktail originsâ" or just pour you a mean drink. In Speakeasy, Kosmas and Zaric take their inspiration from traditional favorites, then use the finest spirits, the freshest ingredients, and a good measure of reverence for their craft to elevate the mixed drink to artisanal status.Â More than 80 imaginative libations that riff on the classics are showcased in this one-of-a-kind collection. Recipes emphasize fresh fruits and herbs, homemade syrups and infusions, and a careful balancing of flavors, with a mind toward seasonality. A Ginger Smash is offered in four different versions: kumquat, pineapple, pear, or cranberry, depending on the time of year. The Millionaire becomes the Billionaire with the addition of homemade grenadine and 107-proof bourbon. And the South Side becomes the West Side by replacing the gin with sun-kissed Meyer lemonâ"infused vodka. With the specter of Prohibition firmly in the past, Speakeasy shares recipes for the choicest potent potables, reimagining the finest drinks of yesterday for todayâ™s thirsty imbibers.

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Customer Reviews

"Speakeasy" comes to us at the height of the cocktail revival from people who believe they were largely responsible for that revival. According to the book's authors, the bartenders at Employees Only (a New York watering hole that seeks to recreate the atmosphere of Smart Drinking), America has entered the Platinum Age of the cocktail. Thanks in large part to their efforts and wisdom, Americans are re-learning how to drink and what makes a great cocktail. This book is the product of much of their hard-won wisdom. On the good side, the book is a reasonably extensive how-to list for making dozens of different cocktails. Each cocktail receives its own write-up on a single page that has plenty of room for margin notes and recipe tweaks - and to their credit the authors encourage the reader to experiment. The authors know that while there are certain mechanics and rules to making good cocktails, mixing a good drink is an art that takes on the personality of the creator. And so we are encouraged to create variations off of these recipes. Also on the good side - the book contains instructions for how to make your own mixes at home rather than buying the off-the-shelf stuff at the liquor store. This is a sterling addition to the book. Consider - if you're having a Mexican feast over at a friend's house, would you prefer it is he or she made his or own picante sauce or if instead you were handed a bottle of Pace? The same should hold true for such things as simple syrup, grenadine, and the like. True - if you take this book too seriously you're going to be spending an awful lot of time preparing your libations, but such is the price to pay for quality. The book also provides some lessons on the bartending craft.

(NOTE: This review pertains to a softcover advance copy of the book, and not the final text) Perfect for budding amateur bartenders, "Speakeasy: The Employees Only Guide to Classic Cocktails Reimagined" is a quality cocktail recipe book that (mostly) hits all the right notes, with a few caveats. Within the book, you will find a classy, smart selection of alcoholic drink recipes that you may or may not be familiar with (e.g. Manhattans, cosmopolitans, sangrias, sidecars, whiskey sours, punches, gimlets, spritzes, Bloody Marys, etc.). Besides classic cocktails, there are recipes for aperitifs, long drinks, pick-me-ups, cordials, infusions, sangrias, punches, homemade syrups and other drink accompaniments. Most of the timeless drinks included in this book (more than eighty of them) have been reworked with a modern spin, and mostly to good effect. The reworkings are generally respectful and smart, as they honor and (usually) enhance the included classic drink recipes, rather than distort them. The prose of the book is simple, eloquent and lovingly written (admittedly, I did find the writing to be a bit pretentious at times, but endearingly so). There are lots of intriguing historical tidbits peppered throughout the book; in fact, every recipe in the book is

accompanied by a passage that includes background info and other helpful descriptive notes specific to each drink. There is also an informative section in the book that gives helpful preparation tips on how to create the "perfect" cocktail, including general mixing techniques and proper choice of tools. There are plenty of illustrations and photos contained within the book, always a plus with recipe books of any kind.

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