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The Reinvention of the Hotel Bar

Written by Amy Plitt · July 23, 2015



These upscale, creative lounges are bringing romance back to the hotel bar with cocktail programs that entice locals and travelers alike.

At its best, a hotel bar is more than just a place to grab a cold drink before heading out for a night on the town; it should make you want to stay in, being transported instead through an alluring setting, an excellent cocktail menu, or some combination of the two. Some hotels have taken this to heart—see the perennially crowded bars at hot spots like Manhattan’s Ace Hotel or the Standard, or elegant, classic spots like the Dukes in London or Bemelmans Bar in New York—and several new properties have become destinations unto themselves. By partnering with renowned bartenders, they’ve expanded the idea of what a hotel bar can be, with cutting-edge cocktails, delicious food, and a hip atmosphere drawing crowds beyond hotel guests.

THE BROKEN SHAKER, MIAMI, FL AND CHICAGO, IL

When The Freehand, an upscale hostel, opened in Miami in 2012, it garnered attention for both its trend-setting design (by Roman & Williams, the same folks behind the Ace Hotel) and for its superlative bar, the Broken Shaker. Created by Elad Zvi and Gabriel Orta of the cocktail consulting firm Bar Lab, the hot spot quickly became a critical darling, and has since been nominated twice for the Outstanding Bar Program at the James Beard Awards. With the expansion of the Freehand brand to Chicago comes the opening of a second Broken Shaker location, with a menu that’s inspired by its location. “We moved to Chicago three months prior to the opening to get acquainted with the culture and vibe of the area,” say Zvi and Orta. “The menu draws inspiration from some of the strong Mexican influence you find in the city, as well as some landmark foods, movies about Chicago, and local ingredients we discovered along the way.” To that end, look out for cocktails like the Risky Business or the Chicago Politics, as well as a daily punch option.