

# The Broken Shaker

Bars , Cocktail bars    River North    \$ \$ \$ \$    ✓    ★★☆☆☆    ★★★★★ (7)



Photograph: Martha Williams  
Broken Shaker

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**TIME OUT SAYS** ★★☆☆☆

A Miami cocktail bar slides right into Chicago's drinking scene.

Some excellent cocktail bars have opened in Chicago this year, but none are serving cocktails quite as interesting as Broken Shaker, the second location of Gabe Orta and Elad Zvi's Miami bar, which checks in at #22 on the World's 50 Best Bars list. Located in the Freehand Hotel, the Chicago outpost also aims high—it's under the watch of talented bartender Freddie Sarkis, who finessed some Broken Shaker classics for Chicago drinkers by making them less sweet and contributed new cocktails to the 15-drink list.

Where the Miami spot has a pool and a sprawling patio, the Chicago bar is dark and cozy, with palm tree wallpaper lending a bit of the tropics. It's a comfortable spot for working through the cocktail list, which is packed with balanced, successful drinks. Fresh fruits and herbs play a large role in Miami, and in Chicago, there's an emphasis on savory. Some combinations sound out there, but the flavors work in harmony, as in Risky Business, gin punched up with umeboshi vinegar, pickles and herbal Balsam Amaro from Rare Tea Cellar's Rodrick Markus and bartender Adam Seger. In the Godmother, sherry and mezcal take on vegetal notes from roasted corn reduction, and a rim coated with savory chapulin (yep, grasshoppers) herb salt adds clean salinity. The only cocktail I tried but didn't finish was Chicago Politics, with an aggressive burn from Sichuan pepper that overwhelms the Absolut Elyx, sherry and spiced coconut cream.

The thought put into cocktails here extends to simpler drinks—bartenders slide bottles of Miller High Life into little paper bags and pour champagne into chilled, sparkling coupes. Small things, yes, but they help elevate Broken Shaker to among Chicago's best bars.

## Vitals

**Atmosphere:** The vibe is tropical-meets-Midwest, with palm tree wallpaper and octopus decor along with dark wood panels, grandmotherly knickknacks and a shrine-like installment on the wall. The main bar is small, though you can spill out into the lobby if it's full. The space is pretty dark, and this isn't a place for Instagramming your drinks—it's best for cozy dates and hanging out in small groups.

**What to eat:** The food menu, from Jonathan Meyer and Daniel Diersen, is more ambitious than it needs to be. While there's practically a whole school of fried smelt in the fish and chips, the burger is simple and manageable, with griddled onions sandwiched between the patties. For an easy bar snack, a take on the flavors of papas bravas mixes fried chickpeas, nuggets of hominy and quartered caperberries with heavy spices.

**What to drink:** The Godmother is an excellent pick, and the banana rum Manhattan, a funky drink with subtle hints of banana, is another standout. My favorite is the deeply flavored sherry cobbler, a rotating recipe dispensed on draft. Currently, it's a nutty house blend of Manzanilla, oloroso and amontillado sherries, mixed with rum and strawberry orange oleo-saccharum. Most drinks are \$12-\$13, but a \$9 daily punch is a slightly more affordable option.

**Where to sit:** I always prefer to post up at the bar, and here, the bartenders are friendly and knowledgeable, so it's a fun spot to sit. There are also a handful of tables and additional seating in the lobby, better for bigger groups.

**BY: AMY CAVANAUGH**

**POSTED: THURSDAY JULY 9 2015**

- Close full review

## DETAILS

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The Broken Shaker

**Contact:**

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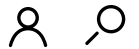
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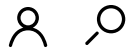
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Berkshire Room



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