JACK'S BLACK BOOK

Volume Six

THE LOVE EDITION

Written by Eric "ET" Tecosky

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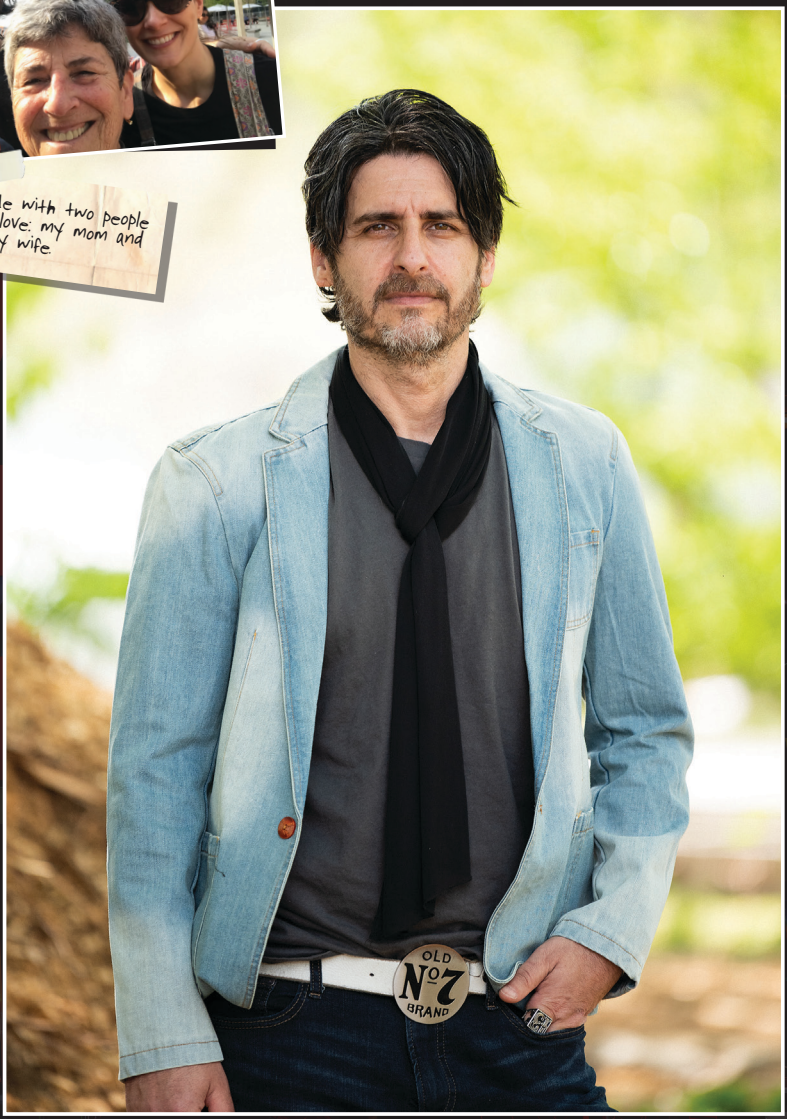
LOVE IS A FOUR-LETTER WORD I CAN GET BEHIND. It covers so much in our lives. It can be specific: "I love you." It can be super hippie: "Hey, the more love you put out in the universe, the more love will come back to you." It can be the answer to every question we face in life: "Love is all you need." Love really is it. From its ability to inspire countless songs, books, and movies to the way it motivates so much of what we do, love is all around us. Yet it still seems to be the one thing we all need most.

After a year of loss and uncertainty — and as we move toward a hopeful future we can see but not quite touch — it's time to let love, not fear, motivate some of our decisions. It's time to lead with love, because when love is part of the solution, problems get solved. And not every gesture has to be grand.

This year, I asked bartenders who were featured in previous issues of *Jack's Black Book* to share the love and recommend someone they dig to be a part of this edition. It worked. It brightened people's days and put smiles on their faces — even if just for a moment. And those moments are worth it.

Next time you're not sure about something, just add a little love and see what happens. Trust me. Life never gets worse when it's filled with love.

Me with two people I love: my mom and my wife.



Demi NATOLI

NOMINATED BY: **JOAQUÍN SIMÓ**

RING AROUND THE ROSIE

- 1¾ oz. Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey
- ½ oz. Dolin Blanc Vermouth de Chambéry
- ¼ oz. Giffard Crème de Pêche
- ¼ oz. lemon curd
- ¼ oz. simple syrup
- 3 dashes absinthe

Whip, dump, and serve with crushed ice in a Collins glass. Garnish with a peach ring, mint sprig, and star anise.

DEMI HAS BEEN IN HOSPITALITY HER WHOLE LIFE. Her parents owned a bar and a restaurant, so this world had been calling her name for some time before she ended up behind the stick. Like many in this industry, she started as a host and worked her way up. When she landed her first bartending job at a new tiki bar in her home state of Florida, the guys who were consulting on the project really got her hooked. "They trained me well and set me on the path I really never left," she told me.

After a few years running that tiki bar, Demi got an offer she couldn't refuse in Chicago. "That is the job that really cemented my love of bartending. I learned so much and met so many people there," she recalled. After the Windy City, she took a gig in Nashville that further opened her eyes to the behind-the-scenes world of running a bar. "What I learned here has been invaluable and is really helping me get to my goal of opening my own place one day," she added.

After talking with Demi for a short while, I was convinced that the bar life is for her, but what I always really like to know is the "why." "It's the people," she said. "My whole Iife, I always felt more like a homebody, but this job taught me that I actually like to be social and meet people and help them enjoy their experience better. When I travel, I learn what I should do by hanging out at a bar and finding out the inside track to a city from the bartender. I also love being that person for my guests." So I guess this tip isn't too hot, but the next time you're in Nashville, hang out at Demi's bar! She will dial you in to the city...

Napier "Naps" BULANAN

NOMINATED BY: **JESSE PETERSON**

NAPS HAS ALWAYS WORKED IN SERVICE. She loved being able to help people when she started out in the nonprofit world, but after she picked up a couple shifts as a barback, she became smitten with hospitality. She loved that she could still be of service to people and make them happy, and the pace of bartending really fit her personality: Naps is the never-not-working type, which I'm sure her bosses appreciate.

Another part of bartending that she fell in love with was the sense of community. "Everyone is so supportive, and on nights off, we are all always going to see our friends at other bars. We really rally around each other," she told me. This camaraderie has been even more evident during the pandemic. "We are all in touch with each other, making sure we are all OK and know the services available to out-of-work restaurant workers during these times," she said. Naps has also been able to find some good in the past year, as she's found time to reconnect with loved ones and close friends.

And fun fact: Naps and her husband had a COVID wedding! "We sourced everything locally to do what we could to help businesses in our community," she said. The only thing missing from her wedding day was hugs — I'll toast to the fact that we could all use a hug or two at this point!

YOU & ME

YOU AND ME

- 1 oz. Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey
- 1 oz. Meletti Amaro
- ¼ oz. Cherry Heering Liqueur
- 3 oz. soda water
- 2 dashes Angostura bitters

Pour the Jack Daniel's, amaro, and cherry liqueur into a Collins glass. Add ice and fill with soda water. Top with bitters and garnish with a lemon twist.

Sacha DURHAM

NOMINATED BY: **VENA EDMONDS**

SACHA'S FIRST JOB HAD HER FLIPPING BOTTLES and wearing flair at a national chain restaurant, and while the business has changed a ton since then, one part of her training she held on to was making sure her customers felt like they were walking into a neighborhood corner spot. "If you come into my bar, you will be back — you are family," she said.

When you speak to Sacha even just for a bit, her passion is infectious, and it's clear that she really has a love for bartending. "It's a new day, every day," she said. "I love the hustle and bustle and I love to learn. My early training was pretty thorough, but as things change, you keep growing and expanding on what you are doing. And then sometimes what's old is new again. I love it all."

SUMMER MADNESS

- 1¼ oz. Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey
- 1 oz. smoked pineapple syrup*
- ¾ oz. fresh lemon juice
- ½ oz. Bénédictine
- ½ oz. Calvados

Shake and strain over ice. Top with Peychaud's Bitters and nutmeg, then garnish with a flower of your choice.

*Yields 1 quart of syrup: Grill and smoke pineapple with mesquite. Cut pineapple into thin slices and cover with 1 cup demerara sugar and 1 cup white sugar. Add 2 cinnamon sticks, a few cloves, and the rind of 2 lemons. Shake and cover overnight. Everything must be covered by the sugar to extract the water from the fruit. Strain out solids and add ¼ cup of water.

Another great love of hers is music: "I know everyone says they love all genres, but I really mean it," she told me. "I can even jam out to kids music with my granddaughter!" Cooking is also pretty high up on her list of hobbies. "And since I can't seem to just cook a little bit of food, I have to have people come over to join the party," she added. "Being around friends and family makes everything better!"

A highlight of our conversation was learning that Sacha works about a ten-minute walk away from where my mom lives. I look forward to getting Sacha's signature warm welcome on my next visit to Philly!

Thomas ESLINGER

NOMINATED BY:
ZACH PATTERSON

MOST PEOPLE WHO MOVE TO L.A. take a minute (or a year) to get adjusted. But Thomas fell in love with the City of Angels immediately. "I thought it was great that there were so many people doing so many different things, but at the same time, each was pursuing a dream," he told me.

That said, he did have the requisite random "L.A. job": He was a doorman at a schmancy clothing store on Rodeo Drive. "They made me wear a suit from the back room and stand guard," he recalled. The one rule? "Don't talk. Just stand there." He'd never been more bored in his life, but on a positive note, he did pick up some style tips from the customers and employees.

As I got to know Thomas, I asked him what his "Coughlin's Law" of bartending would be, in reference to the character Doug Coughlin in the classic '80s film *Cocktail*. Coughlin was the mentor of Tom Cruise's character, and his pearls of wisdom revealed his outlook on life and bartending. While Thomas is way too young to be mistaken for a Coughlin, he does have a lot of good advice to share, like "Make all your guests feel like they are showing up at their best friend's house" and "Listen to everybody and pay attention to everybody, because there is something to learn from everybody." Next time you're in L.A., pay Thomas a visit and see what all the magic is about.

THREE PEARS HIGHBALL

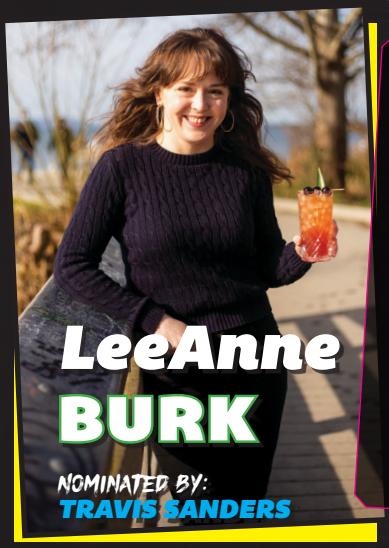
- 2 oz. pear-infused Jack Daniel's Tennessee Rye*
- 1 oz. fresh lime juice
- 1 oz. pear syrup**
- ½ oz. Manzanilla Sherry
- ⅛ oz. Clear Creek Distillery Pear Brandy
- ⅛ oz. Ahus Akvavit
- 1 oz. club soda

Add ingredients except the club soda into a mixing tin with several cubes of ice. Shake briefly and strain into a Collins glass filled with ice. Top with soda and stir to combine.

*Core a pear and blend the rest of the fruit with a 750-mL bottle of Jack Daniel's Tennessee Rye. Fine strain through a mesh strainer or cheesecloth.

**Combine 200 g of pear juice with 100 g of evaporated cane sugar.

SEATTLE, WA



LeeAnne BURK

NOMINATED BY:
TRAVIS SANDERS

BACK IN A DASH

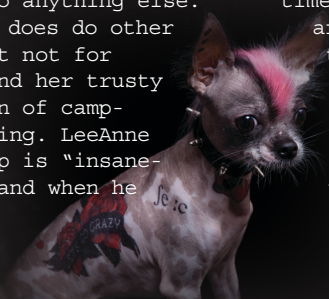
* 1½ oz. Jack Daniel's Tennessee Rye
* ½ oz. Jack Daniel's Single Barrel Barrel Proof
* ½ oz. honey syrup (1:1 honey and water)
* ½ oz. fresh lime juice
* ½ oz. fresh blood orange juice
* ¼ oz. allspice dram
* ¼ oz. falernum
* 2 dashes orange bitters

Combine ingredients in a shaker tin and shake with ice until the tin starts to get a little frosty, then strain into a Collins glass over small or crushed ice. Garnish with 3 black cherries (I use Amarena Toschi) and a pineapple leaf.

AS FAR AS BARTENDER ORIGIN STORIES GO, LeeAnne's was a first for me. Her mom was a regular at a bar near their house, and when she would go for a drink, a responsible young LeeAnne would babysit her siblings. The bar staff found out, and before long, LeeAnne was babysitting their kids as well — sometimes up to six at once! While getting to know the staff, she started to fall in love with the idea of becoming a bartender. When she turned 21, she started working toward that dream, and as soon as she got there, she never wanted to do anything else.

Well, she does do other things, just not for work. She and her trusty dog do a ton of camping and hiking. LeeAnne said her pup is "insanely smart," and when he doesn't get enough of her attention when company is over, he sits on someone's lap and evil-stares at her to try to make her jealous.

On another note, LeeAnne is open that life wasn't always sunshine and working her dream job. For two years, she and her mom were intermittently homeless as a result of a "bad life situation," but she has come out the other side of that experience with a positive attitude. In this time of need, LeeAnne encourages those who want to help to call shelters before donating: "Sometimes the needs of a shelter are super specific, and that call and donation can make all the difference in the world." Make a call if you can help, and think of LeeAnne when you do.



FALSE NINE

- ¾ oz. Gentleman Jack
- ¾ oz. Aperol
- ¾ oz. fresh lemon juice
- ½ oz. crème de banane liqueur
- ¼ oz. white crème de cacao liqueur
- 1 dash absinthe

Shake and serve up in a coupe.

Peter HANNAH

NOMINATED BY: JOAQUÍN SIMÓ

PETER WAS BORN AND RAISED IN LIVERPOOL, so when I asked him how he ended up in Orlando, he gave me the most Liverpool answer he could: "As John Lennon said, 'Life is what happens when you are busy making other plans.'" I liked him immediately, and I'm sure his guests do too: He has a calm demeanor and quiet confidence with a dash of English wit. It's also clear that he truly loves his job. "I know it sounds like a cliche, but I really like to go into work and host a party," he told me. "The bartender is in charge of making sure a guest has a good time, whether that be through a cocktail or conversation."

Prior to bartending, Peter was in a band, which is probably a requirement for any Liverpool teen. He still enjoys playing and is an artist at heart who is passionate about anything that sparks creativity. "I like to take from experiences in life and channel that into what I do at the bar," he said.

Peter has good answers for everything, including how bartending has changed: "The drinks got much better, and even the guests have a different expectation of what's in the glass...but the standard of service has stayed the same."

SAN FRANCISCO, CA

SHADY JOE

- 1 oz. Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey
- ¾ oz. Calvados
- ½ oz. Rum Fire Overproof Jamaican Rum
- 1 oz. fresh Meyer lemon juice
- ¾ oz. oleo saccharum
- ¾ oz. amaro
- Several dashes Angostura bitters

Colin SMITH

NOMINATED BY: **MICHAEL CARLISI**

ON HIS FIRST TRIP TO SAN FRANCISCO, Colin made his way through his long list of spots to visit. "The first thing I noticed was how much better everyone was at their job than I was," he recalled. His next big trip was his first visit to Tales of the Cocktail, where he met and hung out with lots of people whom he looked up to in the bar world. All of these experiences lit a fuse that inspired him to keep getting better.

And better he got. Eventually, Colin settled in the Bay Area and ended up working at some of the very same bars he visited on that fateful first trip. Over the years, I'm sure there have been a few young bartenders who found themselves sitting in front of Colin and thinking, "Man, that guy is so much better at this than I am."

Another thing Colin is good at is mountaineering. When he told me this, my first question was, "What is mountaineering?" Colin explained that it's different from backpacking, hiking, and climbing and "is focused on getting to the top of the peak — and it may include some of the other pursuits as well." "What kind of 'other pursuits'?" you might ask. Well, "you may come to the end of a path and have to cross a crevice on a ladder that someone placed from one icy edge to the other. The crevice could be hundreds of feet down," Colin said calmly.

I'm out. I guarantee you that the next time I see Colin we will be enjoying a cocktail — not crossing crevices.

DONUTS AND MILK

- 1 oz. Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey
- ½ oz. Amaro Montenegro
- ¼ oz. simple syrup
- ¾ oz. Baileys Irish Cream
- ¾ oz. Juggernaut Cabernet Sauvignon

Add the Baileys to a snifter and fill the glass ¾ full with crushed ice. Combine the Jack, Montenegro, and simple syrup and layer the cocktail onto a barspoon over the crushed ice. Add more crushed ice to the glass and then pour in the Cabernet over the barspoon. Serve with a Hostess mini chocolate-glazed donut.

Sebastian "Bash" WILLIAMS

NOMINATED BY: **MICHAEL NEFF**

WHEN HE'S NOT BARTENDING, Bash is an accomplished lacrosse player...or not. When I asked him what he digs outside of bartending, that's how he jokingly responded, but it gave me insight into his pretty dry and engaging sense of humor. Bash obviously spends a lot of his time behind the bar, including when he's working countless events via his own cocktail company, but kidding aside, he also enjoys music, art, and anything creative or positive for his own development — including simply enjoying a glass of wine with a good friend.

I am always fascinated by how people end up as bartenders. For Bash, it was a "father knows best" situation: His dad was a regular at a neighborhood bar and saw how much fun the employees had there...not to mention how well they seemed to do in the tips department. He suggested to his son that it may be a good direction to take. Bash agreed, went to bartending school, and ended up working at that very same bar. I will always wonder if it was all part of his dad's long play at getting a solid discount at his favorite watering hole!

LOS ANGELES, CA

Greg BUSHIN

NOMINATED BY: **MIA MASTROIANNI**

I'M NOT EVEN SURE WHERE TO START WHEN IT COMES TO GREG. There is so much fun stuff to share, including his job before bartending: teaching Algebra II to high school juniors. I guess it should come as no shock that his favorite part of the day was grabbing a drink after work. "I didn't drink a lot, but that moment always made my day," he recalled.

It also changed his life, because while he was decompressing, he took notice of what was happening behind the scenes and became very inquisitive with the staff. So he went back to school — bartending school — and also became a Level 1 sommelier. Eventually, he ended up behind the bar and never looked back. I asked Greg if he was ever worried about leaving the security of a teaching job for a much more unpredictable life, and he responded, "I thought that I'd rather try and fail at something that seemed amazing than never try." Those are good words to live by, and after speaking to Greg for a few minutes, you get the sense that he has always done just that.

Another thing to like about Greg is that he is a Cali guy through and through and a self-described "surfer/yoga dude." He also dabbles in cooking and swears by Anthony Bourdain's books. "He's the man and he didn't mess around," he said. "I like his style and I stick to it." I'll leave you with one final fun fact: Greg's current gig is bartending inside of a train station.

NO IN BETWEEN

- 2 oz. Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey
- ½ oz. Mommenpop d'Sange Blood Orange Vermouth
- ½ oz. Vya Sweet Vermouth
- ½ oz. Bruto Americano
- 1 dash cassia bark bitters

Combine ingredients and stir with ice. Serve in a rocks glass over fresh ice and garnish with a blood orange twist, preferably the red part of the skin.

LAS VEGAS, NV

SPICED HEART

* 2 oz. Jack Daniel's Single Barrel Rye
* 1 sugar cube
* 3 dashes Bittercube Corazón Bitters
* 2 dashes orange bitters

Smoke a rocks glass with palo santo. Drop the sugar cube in a mixing glass and add both types of bitters. Muddle sugar and bitters until completely dissolved. Add Jack Daniel's and stir over ice. Pour over a 2x2 ice cube, garnish with an orange peel, and finish with orange oil spray.

Joy FIGUEROA

NOMINATED BY: **TONY ABOU-GANIM**

BACK WHEN SHE WAS LIVING IN HER NATIVE PUERTO RICO, Joy went to visit her cousins who owned a bar in Old San Juan. She fell in love with the whole dynamic there and begged them to show her the ropes, so eventually they let her work a big street festival as part of what she called a "make-it-or-break-it challenge." She made it, of course, but her success wasn't too surprising given her upbringing. Her father's work ethic is built into her DNA, but her own experience helped as well: Both of her cousins from the bar were Marines, and she also lived the high-and-tight life while working as a swimming instructor on a military base.

But Puerto Rico's service business was not flush with opportunity, so a friend suggested she come check out Vegas. She did, dug it, sold her stuff back home, and made the move to Sin City. Joy's current gig is at one of the top "off-the-Strip" spots there, and she still loves what she does as much as she did when she discovered her cousins' bar.

"I was an only child, so the bar is like a big family," she told me. "There is a loyalty and support I find in the industry that I just don't see elsewhere." Today, Joy brings that same family feeling to the guests sitting at her bar. If you pay her a visit, you'll understand the full meaning of her name: With her contagious laugh, she spreads joy everywhere she goes.

Ashlyn "Ash" MIYASAKI

NOMINATED BY: CARI HAH

I KNEW I WAS REALLY GOING TO LIKE ASH before I even met her because the woman who nominated her is one of my favorite people. Then, when Ash and I did meet, it was pretty obvious after the first two questions I asked her that I was gonna like her all on my own — she has a very chill but confident vibe that makes it easy to connect with her.

So what did Ash say that made me like her so much? First, when I asked her what she loves about bartending, she gave me this thoughtful response: "Those nights that you have where everything is clicking. Nights with great customers that you get to have conversations with and great bartenders to work with and have that 'dance' together with behind the bar. The creativity of cocktail making, and especially the community of bartenders. The whole city becomes your workplace because we all support each other."

Then I asked her what she thought the difference was between a great and not-so-great bartender. "Care," she answered. "Paying attention to details. Feeling out customers' needs so they get a great experience, and also really putting thought into your drinks. Even when you are following a recipe, you can still not care, and it will show in your effort, your style, and the drink itself."

Since it was obvious that she puts a ton of care into her own work, I knew there must be something Ash does to unwind during her downtime. She not only writes, draws, and paints but also enjoys "being in nature and escaping," she told me. "I like the beauty and the calm of that world. It balances the other side of my life that is fast and always 'on.'"

BURN CARD *(Peppered Jack Old Fashioned)*

- 2 oz. Jack Daniel's Tennessee Rye
- 1 dash Angostura bitters
- 2 dashes Peychaud's Bitters
- ¼ oz. peppercorn syrup*

Combine ingredients in a mixing glass with ice and stir until chilled. Strain into a rocks glass over a large ice cube. Garnish with a grapefruit peel lightly expressed over the top.

*Coarse grind 1 tsp. pink peppercorns and 1 tsp. black peppercorns and lightly toast on a stovetop until fragrant. Remove from heat and add to ¼ cup cane sugar. Add ¼ cup hot filtered water and stir until the sugar is dissolved. Let it cool for 10 minutes before fine straining out the peppercorn solids. Cover and refrigerate.

DALLAS, TX

MIDAS TOUCH

- 2 oz. Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey
- 1 oz. fresh lemon juice
- 1 oz. simple syrup
- ½ oz. peach schnapps
- ½ oz. elderflower liqueur

Shake with rosemary leaves and a dash of gold pearl dust. Pour in a Martini glass and garnish with a gold-dusted rosemary sprig and a lemon wheel.

Laron ROLAND

NOMINATED BY: **TUTU ADETOMIWA**

IN LARON'S WORDS, "Pretty and delicious drinks bring people joy. It's all in the name of hospitality: When people come into your bar, you have the opportunity to make their day better." With this mentality, it's no surprise he has a pretty great group of regulars who sit at the bar to visit with him. "There is a connection between a bartender and a guest that can't be duplicated when someone is at the table," Laron said. "I've met so many great people at the bar. It's one of the highlights of this job."

Laron then shared a special story about a couple who seemed like they were out for a well-deserved date night, so he pulled out all the stops to make sure they got their money's worth. Turns out money was in fact an issue for them, and they mentioned to Laron that they had worked to save up for a night out because they needed some happiness in their life. They thanked him for his great service and attention to detail, which had made the outing much more memorable than they'd expected.

Laron was so touched that he told his manager about the couple's situation, and some discounts were made to their bill. Of course, my jaded mind immediately considered that the whole situation was a ploy to get free food. When I said this, Laron laughed and said, "If they were conning us, they deserved Oscars for the performance. I really think they were just good people facing hard times." Let's all hope for the sake of humanity that this story is 100% true.

LOS ANGELES, CA

Ally DEVELLIS

NOMINATED BY: YAEL VENGROFF

THAT'S A STRANGE BIRD

- 1¾ oz. Jack Daniel's Tennessee Rye
- ¼ oz. Cappelletti Amaro Sfumato Rabarbaro
- ¾ oz. fresh pineapple juice
- ½ oz. fresh lemon juice
- ½ oz. Chinese five-spice cane syrup
- 7 drops Bittercube Blackstrap Bitters

Build in a mixing tin. Whip shake with one Kold-Draft cube or a few pieces of pebble ice until dissolved and strain over crushed ice. Garnish with a dehydrated lemon wheel and chocolate mint sprig.

WHEN I ASKED ALLY WHAT MADE her take the pilgrimage out west from New York City, she gave two very good reasons: "I felt my apartment shrinking every year even though my career was doing better and better. And walking to work in the winter was not fun either." Once she made the move to L.A., she settled in pretty easily and fell in with the city's bartending community thanks to a good new gig.

Ally may have a "major" in bartending, but she also has a few minors as well: the culinary arts, for one, as she loves to cook with interesting ingredients she finds at the farmers market. Her second is in gardening: She loves taking advantage of the Southern California weather to grow her own herbs, peppers, figs, and more and enjoys the whole process, from finding the perfect soil to making sure the sun shines brightly on her greens.

Finally, Ally's third minor is in design — in other words, taking an empty space and making it perfect. She brings her eye for form and function to her work at the bar, too, by keeping everything at her station in its proper place.

This was the moment the conversation took a turn for the worse — for me, that is — as her neat-freak tendencies drove me to comment that Ally seemed like a much-cooler Felix Unger. Cue the silence. I was sure I had offended her, only to find out that she was just too young to get the reference. (Of course, the flip side of that is that I'm old.) She asked me to describe him, and I said that he's the type who would be vacuuming under his roommates' feet as they dropped potato chip crumbs everywhere. She contemplated this for a moment and responded, "Yes, I'm a total Felix Unger"...but definitely cooler.

Lane COMPTON

NOMINATED BY: **DAMIAN WINDSOR**

NEARLY NEARIS' TEA

A Los Angeles riff on the Lynchburg Lemonade in honor of Nathan "Nearest" Green

* 2 oz. Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey
* ½ oz. Licor 43
* ½ oz. fresh lemon juice
* 1 fresh orange slice
* 2 oz. strong ginger beer

Combine all ingredients but the ginger beer, add ice, shake, and strain over ice in a bucket glass or large Old Fashioned glass. Top with the ginger beer and garnish with a mint sprig stuck through a nutmeg-dusted dehydrated lemon wheel.

IT SEEMS INEVITABLE THAT LANE WOULD END UP in *Jack's Black Book* at some point, because we've been crossing paths for years. Soon after moving to L.A., Lane did a play with two people I bartended with, and he reached out to them looking for work. We weren't hiring, but the owner was opening a new spot, so Lane started training there as a barback.

Damian Windsor, who nominated Lane for this book, took him under his wing and put him on the path to becoming a great bartender. After months of asking question after question, some more relevant than others, Lane recalled Damian saying, "Y'know, Google is a tool for everyone."

Lane also used to frequent the bar where I worked, and it was there he met one of my regulars and closest friends, Nathan. Nathan is a physicist but also had a side gig at the time as a bass player for an amazing blues band in South Central L.A. They performed on Sunday nights, and Lane would come by to grab some dinner and a drink before heading out to catch the show. The band kind of took Lane in, and one of the guys would always give him words of wisdom like "Make sure you do something this week to better yourself" or simple gems like "You better shine those shoes, Compton."

With all this love in his life, Lane understandably turned out pretty great. And we can all use the lesson that it doesn't matter how well you dress if your shoes aren't clean!

Barry WRIGHT

NOMINATED BY: **ASHLEE LAFAYETTE**

TWICE RYE

- 1¼ oz. Jack Daniel's Tennessee Rye
- ½ oz. Midori
- ¼ oz. Cappelletti Amaro Sfumato Rabarbaro
- ¼ oz. rose liqueur
- ¾ oz. fresh lemon juice
- ½ oz. black pepper-strawberry syrup

Shake, strain, and serve with a lemon wheel.

BARRY GOT HIS START IN HOSPITALITY DURING HIS TEENS, working everywhere from delis to sushi restaurants to steak spots. "I really like to cook but craved the guest interaction you don't get in the kitchen," he explained, so he hung up his apron and got a job as a server. He also happened to be getting pretty into the cocktail scene, so when a bartender quit mid-shift, Barry was asked to jump in.

And he loves it to this day — namely creating great cocktails and building a welcoming environment for his guests. "You never know what kind of experience a guest is looking for when they walk in," he said. "It's cool to be able to form a relationship, sometimes very quickly, while they wait for a friend and be the conduit to help them enjoy their time."

When I asked Barry about his hobbies, one was a bit unexpected — parkour! "Some friends and I went to see *Avatar*, and we were oddly inspired by the movie and how all the trees moved," he recalled. "We went to a part of town that had stuff to climb and jump on and did a very basic first attempt of parkour. I heard there was a local parkour group, so I joined, and when I went off to college, I joined the parkour club."

Safety was always a huge part of the training, but Barry admits there was one time he jumped off of the second floor of a parking structure and did not stick the landing. Thankfully, he was only bruised, not beaten. I am not suggesting he use his skills to become some type of superhero, but now that he is living in NYC, I wouldn't be too upset if I read the *New York Post* one day and the headline read, "Who is this masked man saving the city?" His secret would be safe with me.

DETROIT, MI

Aleahia THOMPSON

NOMINATED BY: LEONARD LOPP

BEFORE BUILDING HER CAREER BEHIND THE BAR, Aleahia bounced around a few factory jobs, mostly involving auto parts. But one former gig she told me about stood out: For a while, she filled orders at a sex toy factory. "That was always a funny job to talk about," she said. Let's just hope she didn't keep a master list of who bought what.

Aleahia started looking at getting into bartending because she had some friends who did it, and as a passionate traveler, she thought it would be a great gig because you can find work anywhere. She made the switch and has been happy ever since. "There are so many awful things in the world, so it's nice to have a job where you can help people have a nice time, have a nice time yourself, and bond with good people — customers and co-workers," she said.

After a long week of being super busy at work, she likes to recharge by catching up on sleep as well as writing, which she finds really relaxing and fulfilling. Once she's back in balance, Aleahia loves spending time with her friends, and during the pandemic she's also rediscovered her love of playing music and painting. If all of that didn't keep her busy enough, Aleahia has also been keeping up with her martial arts training online. That may sound like an unconventional way to move up in belt levels, but I do see the value of virtual learning in this case — no black eyes or seeing little birdies around your head!

BLACK-HEARTED LOVE

- 2 oz. Jack Daniel's Tennessee Rye
- ¾ oz. cranberry-and-black peppercorn syrup
- ½ oz. fresh lemon juice

Shake over ice. Pour over an ice rose and top with a drop of rose water.

Brenon MYKAL STUART

NOMINATED BY: CLINT "SPOTTY" SPOTLESON

BEFORE WORKING BEHIND THE STICK, Brenon had every restaurant job you could think of. Then he became a regular at *Jack's Black Book* alum Clint "Spotty" Spotleson's bar and encountered great cocktails. "Once I discovered that there was a whole other world out there, I got pretty into it," he recalled.

Brenon has a lot of fun making ingredients and being creative while getting ready for his shift — and he really loves putting it all together to share with his guests. "As a team, when we work together and create things and then find out our customers really enjoy the finished product, it's pretty rewarding," he said.

But his creativity doesn't stop there. "My girlfriend and I like to go all out and create great meals together," he told me. Of course, if you're going to eat like a king, you need to work it off, so during the shutdown, Brenon took up cycling: "It's fun and keeps me active."

One thing about Brenon that surprises people is that he's proud to call himself a nerd — and they're even more surprised to hear that he was in a punk rock band. As a bartender/video game junkie/amateur chef/cyclist/punk rocker, he's a pretty unique multihyphenate. I'm guessing someone advised him years ago, "You do you!" And he said, "Got it!"

GOLD DIGGER

Serves 5 in a 750-mL

- 7¾ oz. sesame oil-washed Jack Daniel's Single Barrel Select*
- 4 oz. clarified black-plum juice
- 2 oz. Drapò Rosé Vermouth
- 2 oz. H&H Madeira Verdelho 10-Year
- 1 oz. verjus blanc
- 2 oz. umeboshi syrup**
- 6½ oz. water
- 4% sugar by volume (30 g)
- 0.4% malic acid by volume (3 g)

Garnish with a fresh shiso leaf, local Arizona chocolate and honeycomb, and sliced black plum.

*10% toasted sesame oil by volume. Shake and freeze overnight. Strain solids through a coffee filter.

**Combine 1000 g sugar, 1000 g water, and 500 g umeboshi (preserved plum candy) in a thermomixer at 195 degrees Fahrenheit for 25 minutes on Speed 2. Strain solids through a fine mesh strainer. Bottle and store for up to two weeks.

DENVER, CO

PEEL OUT

- 2 oz. Jack Daniel's Tennessee Rye
- ½ oz. Giffard Banane du Brésil
- ½ oz. Cocchi Vermouth di Torino
- 2 dashes Angostura bitters
- 2 dashes Strongwater Cherry CBD Bourbon Bitters

Stir with ice, strain over a large rock, and express a lemon peel over the top.

Amanda HOUGHTALING

NOMINATED BY: **CHAD MICHAEL GEORGE**

AMANDA GREW UP IN A TINY TOWN IN UPSTATE NEW YORK. She got what she thought was a server job, but it turned out to be a bartending job that should not have been offered to her because she was not yet 21. (Note to anyone hiring a bartender: Ask for ID.) Her first drink was a disaster, but she took that as a challenge to learn how to do everything right — and she accomplished this by pressuring the older bartenders into mentoring her. "Then it became the classic bartender story: I fell in love with the hustle and the energy, and it was a great way to make money," she said.

Whether she is behind the bar or out and about in her daily life, her vibe is the same. "I love to help and provide for people and make people happy," she told me. "And if I am able to show people a better way to provide for themselves, even better." One way she does that is by being really into holistic nutrition — so into it, in fact, that she went back to school for it.

To balance that, Amanda and her boyfriend have a super-fun tradition on their anniversary. Instead of going to one fancy restaurant and enjoying a great meal, they go to multiple. "It used to literally be full meal to full meal to full meal — all with a theme. Now we are a bit more civilized and share a couple things at one spot and do the same at a couple more spots," she explained. "We make a day of it and I look forward to when we can have a day like that again." I'll second that!

ALBUQUERQUE, NM

FIRST LIGHT

- 2 oz. duck fat-washed Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey
- ¼ oz. demerara syrup
- 4 dashes Berry's Mountain Man Bitters (mainly piñon, cassia chips, and vanilla)
- 2 dashes Berry's Springtime Bitters (mainly grapefruit and chamomile)

Stir and pour over a cedar-smoked ice cube. Use an atomizer to spray a small spritz of First Light Aroma (pine, sage, juniper, and bee pollen tincture) over the top and garnish with 4 piñon nuts on top of the ice cube.

Michael BERRY

NOMINATED BY:
LAYLA LINN SOULEK

MICHAEL'S FIRST JOB WAS BARTENDING, and while he bounced around doing a bit of everything in the service industry after that, he always wanted to be back behind the stick. So when a great job came up, he jumped at the chance. "I really like when guests are looking for information about what goes on behind the bar," he told me. "And if they don't want to learn anything and just want to decompress from the day, that's cool too, and I love to help with that."

Michael has been sober for six years and loves to give back to the community that was there for him when he needed it. I asked him if his sobriety made it tough to work as a bartender. "Not at all," he said. "And I don't hide it. Because of that, many other co-workers and friends have come to me at various stages of their journey to get help when they need it."

That outlook plays right into a program they have at his workplace called Mental Health Awareness Mondays. "It's a time for all of us to check in and make sure we are all OK, making good decisions, and finding help and support if it's needed," he said. "During the pandemic it's been especially useful, as everyone is experiencing life and emotions and stresses that may not have existed before, or at least existed to the degree they do now." That sounds like a program that could fit in anywhere.

BANANA BUTTON UP

- 2 oz. Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey
- ½ oz. banana syrup
- ¼ oz. Bigallet China-China Liqueur
- ¾ oz. fresh lemon juice
- 5 dashes Red Devil Bitters

Combine ingredients in a shaking vessel of your choice, add ice, and shake like you mean it. Strain into a rocks glass and add fresh ice. Garnish with a lemon slice and cherry or whatever your heart desires.

Adam ALY

NOMINATED BY: **DAVE FLATMAN**

ALL OF ADAM'S JOBS BEFORE BARTENDING, most of which were in retail, had an element of customer service. "I loved the part of the job where I interacted with people and made their experience better...and definitely did not love the rest of it," he told me. "I tried to figure out how to take the best part of that job and find a career where I could use that often. Bartending fit the bill, but it seemed like a job for the cool kids, which was not my lane."

Dissuaded, he ended up getting a job at a burger joint as a busser, but he worked his way up to the bar. He eventually wanted to learn more and posted on a Facebook group for local bartenders that he was looking for a mentor. "The post ended up getting some attention and I did find a mentor," he said, "and so many of my friends in the industry all started from that thread."

To pay it forward, Adam now likes to mentor up-and-coming bartenders himself. One of the lessons he's learned that he likes to pass along is that "bartending has nothing to do with you — it's all about the customer. Figure out what they want and then use what you know to get them the best version of that." Based on that alone, I look forward to when I can sit at a bar that Adam — or someone he trained — is working behind.

Rodrigo "Rigo" ARANGUREN

NOMINATED BY: **PATTY BUATHONG**

RIGO AND HIS GREAT DANE, KON.

THE MINUTE MAN

- 2 oz. Gentlemen Jack
- 1 barspoon Yellow Rose IPA syrup
- 1 barspoon Green Chartreuse
- 2 dashes Angostura bitters

Stir, strain, and pour over block ice. Garnish with a dehydrated blood orange wheel.

IN A WORLD OF FANCY CRAFT DRINKS, Rigo doesn't put the actual process of making cocktails at the top of the list of what's hard about training a bartender. "Anyone can learn to stir or shake a great drink. Teaching service is much more difficult," he said. "If you are not able to talk to people, you just can't succeed as a bartender." Another philosophy he stresses while training is to "be humble." When I asked him to elaborate, he said that "it's great to have moxie, but don't have arrogance. There is always someone out there who knows more than you, and you can't learn from them if you think you know everything."

Rigo sometimes takes his job home with him, namely through whiskey tastings with friends. "Either we pick up a few bottles or hit a bar that has some new stuff and see what is out there," he said. "I really love whiskey, and there is no better way to learn about what's in the bottle than to try it."

And if trying as much whiskey as possible wasn't keeping him busy enough, Rigo is also completing a degree in mechanical engineering; after that, he'll move on to a master's degree. What is his ultimate goal? "I would love to get into the distilling world," he told me. "I love the science and history of whiskey distilling. You are basically managing ingredients and time, and that really interests me."

If you run into Rigo, there's a good chance you'll also meet his Great Dane, Kon. "I love being with my dog," he said. "It brings me a lot of happiness." I was already a fan of Rigo's, but as a fellow dog owner, that sealed the deal!

Since this Jack's Black Book is all about love, Rigo wanted to dedicate his cocktail to John Squires, a friend in the industry who passed away last year. "The amount of love he had for his son really touched me, and this may be a way I can pay homage to an old friend," Rigo said. These photos were taken at John's bar in Houston.

HUDSON, NH

Mikol MCKEON

NOMINATED BY: JEREMY HART

TEA AT LAST

- 2 oz. Earl Grey-infused Gentleman Jack
- ½ oz. Amaro Lucano
- ½ oz. cinnamon-honey syrup
- ¼ oz. Cream Sherry
- 1 whole egg

Shake over ice and strain into a coupe.

"I LOVE THE CONNECTIONS YOU CAN MAKE IN A BAR," Mikol said. "It can happen the first time you make a customer a drink, and then that can result in a regular for life." I'm sure countless bartenders and guests have been missing that special connection over the past year.

Mikol got his start making sandwiches, not Sazeracs. "I worked at a spot that had to-go six-packs and sandwiches, and through some swinging doors, there was a bar. The owner and I really hit it off and would always have great conversations, so I guess he figured I may fit behind the bar. It was as simple as that."

I asked him the question I like to ask everyone in this line of work: What is the one piece of advice you have for a young bartender? It didn't take Mikol long to boil it down to three words. "Read the room. New bartenders can get so hyperfocused on one task at a time, and as a result, they miss what is going on right in front of them or a few seats down. The more they pay attention to the room, the easier it is to see who needs what and when."

His 4-year-old son has helped inspire him to do just that. "I love watching him discover the world, one new experience at a time," Mikol said. "We recently went to Boston on a little adventure, and it was great to see him wrap his head around the city that towered over him. As adults, we often just go through life and let it pass us by. For him, it's all new and full of wonderment, and his excitement for everything has made me notice and appreciate things more." I'm pretty sure life doesn't get any better than that.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA

Kenny JONES

NOMINATED BY: **JACQUES BEZUIDENHOUT**

BOOKER T

- 2 oz. Jack Daniel's Tennessee Rye
- ¼ oz. Nero Walnut Liqueur
- ¼ oz. Nixta Licor de Elote
- 4 dashes Booker T's bitters (equal blend of cherry bitters, kirschwasser, and cherry liqueur)

Combine ingredients in a mixing glass and stir for 20–30 spins. Strain into a mezcal-rinsed coupe over an ice cube and garnish with 2 brandied cherries on a skewer.

KENNY MOVED FROM ARKANSAS TO THE BAY AREA IN HIS LATE TEENS, and in his words, "It was culture shock. I came from a world of outdoor living and fishing and baseball and didn't know what was going on." Thankfully, he soon discovered BART, the public transportation system, and would venture out to different cities nearby. After a while, he started to realize just how good he had it: From the food and the culture to the people and the overall NorCal vibe, he was sold.

Kenny's interest in food led him to culinary school, but after years of feeling confident in what he wanted to do, he suddenly wasn't so sure. When he got his first restaurant job as a busser, he quickly took notice of the bar. In an instant, cooking turned to cocktails, and after he told everyone who would listen that he wanted to be behind the bar, he eventually got his wish. "I really like the idea of making a solid cocktail and having people enjoy it — sharing smiles through drinks," he said.

Another thing he traded in the move from Arkansas was his baseball mitt for a hockey stick, and he plays the sport as a hobby to this day. He told me he also recently started learning to speak Italian: "I love the country and have visited often, and I wanted to know the language!"

After all these years in his NorCal home, Kenny can't imagine leaving. "I would miss so much about the Bay Area," he said. Rudyard Kipling must have had Kenny in mind when he said, "San Francisco has only one drawback: 'Tis hard to leave."

SINCE YOU'VE BEEN GONE

* 2 oz. Jack Daniel's Single Barrel Barrel Proof
* ¾ oz. fresh egg white
* ¾ oz. fresh lemon juice
* ½ oz. 1:1 simple syrup
* muddled ginger
* ½ oz. raspberry puree
* ½ oz. French ginger liqueur
* ¾ oz. half and half

Andres NARANJO

NOMINATED BY: **DAVE NEWMAN**

A LOT OF GOOD COMES OUT OF WORKING FOR A NATIONAL RESTAURANT GROUP. The systems and training are second to none, and they can give employees a reliable blueprint to work with when they branch out on their own. But maybe the best perk is the ability to bounce from one city to the next — and Andres did just that when he had an opportunity to transfer from San Diego to Hawaii.

Not long after he moved, he decided he probably wasn't leaving anytime soon, but that choice was solidified even more when he fell in love with a local. They now have two young daughters and couldn't be happier. I asked him what he loves most about Hawaii, and he responded, "The people — they are super welcoming and loving, and they like to help each other out whenever they can."

That's hardly all, of course: "I also have always lived near the water and love it," said Andres. "I really enjoy anything beach- and ocean-related," including diving and spearfishing. As he put it, "It's always fun to go out and catch dinner for the family." I asked if his wife ever joins him on the hunt. "Ha, no," he answered. "She loves to watch me do all the work from the beach." Sounds like our wives would get along...

ALBUQUERQUE, NM

FAT HUMPHREY

- 2 oz. Jack Daniel's Single Barrel Rye
- ½ oz. Amaro Nonino
- ½ oz. Santa Fe Spirits Atapiño Liqueur
- 2 dashes Fee Brothers Rhubarb Bitters
- 2 dashes Fee Brothers West Indian Orange Bitters

Combine ingredients in a mixing glass, add ice, and stir. Strain into a rocks glass over ice and express an orange peel over and around the glass.

Daniel MALOTT

NOMINATED BY: NATALIE BOVIS

IT'S NO SURPRISE THAT DANIEL ENDED UP IN THE SERVICE INDUSTRY. His grandpa immigrated to New York from Warsaw as a child, eventually getting into the restaurant business and opening his last spot, Fat Humphrey's, in Albuquerque. While Daniel never got to work for his grandpa, his first job was working for a guy his grandpa trained in the same building that once housed Fat Humphrey's. That's pretty special.

Bartending came a few years later when Daniel was trying to make some side scratch by coaching in a youth soccer league (Good Guy Badge: Check!) while also waiting tables. A bartender was a no-show, so Daniel traded his apron for some tins — and he's loved every minute of it since. "I really like when I have the chance to speak to a guest and help them find the perfect drink to make their day a little better," he said. "I also like when it's head-down busy and you are just taking care of guest after guest."

Daniel never fell into the trap of thinking the job was about the bartender: "It's always about the guest — period." His innate understanding of hospitality is unsurprising given that one of his early mentors was *Jack's Black Book* alumnus Natalie Bovis, who has made a career of putting smiles on faces. And if you were looking for one more reason to like Daniel, I hear he makes a perfect replica of his grandma's famous pecan pie.

FIRST JACK'S BLACK BOOK COUPLE

Alex ALBERICO and Jes NEY

NOMINATED BY: RYAN PUCKETT

Alex

IT SEEMS LIKE ALEX AND I WERE DESTINED TO CROSS PATHS NO MATTER WHAT. He was nominated by a bartender from last year's edition of *Jack's Black Book*, and after speaking for a couple minutes, we realized he also used to work with someone who was in *Black Book I*. It is easy to see why so many people I dig also dig Alex. Right from the start, I really liked his philosophy on bartending: "I love the hospitality," he said. "I always joke that you can teach anyone how to make a drink, but it's the hospitality that can't be taught. It really is a skill set that someone has or does not have."

I also liked his litmus test for a good shift. "Showing people a good time is number one, but I also love when there is a flow between myself and my co-workers," he explained. "We may be getting our butts kicked, but

there is still that sense that we have each other's backs and will get through it and do good work."

That sentiment seems to bleed into his connection with his community in Nashville too. "We've had quite a year with COVID and all the rest of what went on here, and it was great to see everyone band together and make it through," he said. "I don't think every city would handle it the same way."

On the lighter side of things, Alex told me that he has been to every U.S. state except Maine and Hawaii. If lobster poke isn't already a thing, maybe he can make it happen.

LOVE ACTUALLY

- 1½ oz. Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey
- ¾ oz. Cruz Conde
- ½ oz. Yellow Chartreuse
- ½ oz. Apologue Aronia Berry Liqueur
- 1 dash orange bitters
- 1 dash toasted almond bitters

Stir, serve in a coupe, and garnish with a lemon peel.

Jes

THIS IS AN ALL-STAR "HOW I BECAME A BARTENDER" STORY: Jes' mom was a bartender for over two decades and spent most of that time at a country-western bar famous for line dancing. At 7 years old, Jes would rollerblade on the dance floor while her mom was setting up the bar.

If that wasn't fun enough, Jes' first gig was working as a barback for her mom, who did not play favorites with her daughter. Early on, Jes was passing through and forgot to say "behind you," so her mom went into full parent mode and explained the etiquette of working in a bar. Even though it was a super-dive bar, she had the same respect for it that you would find in a white-tablecloth restaurant. That level of professionalism made a big impact on Jes, and to this day she instills that etiquette and respect in the people she trains.

Her COVID side hustle is also way up there on the list of things I love about Jes' story. During the shutdown, she bought a disco ball and figured out how they were made so that she could start her own business making planters out of them. Groovy!

And if I wasn't already a huge fan of these lovebirds, it was a done deal when I found out that Jes and Alex have two doggies that put smiles on their faces all day long.

Rori ROBINSON

NOMINATED BY:
KEYATTA MINCEY PARKER

AMONG THE IRISES

* 1½ oz. Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey
* ½ oz. fennel-mint-berry puree*
* ½ oz. crème de coconut
* ½ oz. fresh lemon juice
* ¼ oz. Luxardo Maraschino Liqueur

Shake with ice in a shaker tin and double strain into a rocks glass over fresh ice. Top with a splash of soda water and garnish with fresh mint sprigs and berries.

*Blend ¾ cup fresh raspberries, ¾ cup fresh blueberries, 4 fresh mint sprigs, 4 fresh fennel sprigs, and 1½ Tbsp. simple syrup until consistency is smooth and herbs are fully incorporated. (It will be thicker than a typical puree.)

ACCORDING TO RORI, she has always been a bit shy, so it's surprising that she chose bartending as a career path. "I like the parts that appeal to my skill set: fast-paced, nonstop working and being creative," she explained. "I didn't get into this business to meet tons of people and be a guest's therapist. But I love creating things from scratch and using fresh ingredients or even things that would otherwise end up in the kitchen trash. It's fun to work with the chef and find new uses for what they can't use."

I had to ask what happens when she works a shift by herself. She laughed and explained her approach: "I'm not unsocial at all — I'm just not the most chatty person in the room. I make sure all my guests are content and never looking for anything. Polite is my middle name...and my style is usually very complimentary with my co-workers' because they are typically the bartender who thrives on the social aspect."

Rori's hard work doesn't stop at the bar. She is an avid gardener whose passion didn't go unnoticed by *Jack's Black Book* alum Keyatta Mincey Parker. Key brought Rori into a community garden project she was working on, which resulted in Rori launching a plant-based product line for cocktails, mocktails, and beyond. She gets a green thumbs up from me. (Sorry, I am part of the Bad Dad Jokes Club and have a quota to fill...)

Justin LEATHERS

NOMINATED BY: **WILL CUTTING**

HERE'S A STORY THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE NOT TO LOVE: When Justin's mom used to throw parties in the Sacramento suburbs when he was a kid, she would have him bartend. He would make Highballs, putting his finger about halfway up the glass, then say, "Is this OK? It's about 50-50." Some guests would lift his finger higher and reply, "70-30 is gonna work better for me." Now, I'm guessing a bar like this wouldn't fly in the real world, but in the family room of Justin's house, it was all good.

As an adult, he started bartending as a way to make some side cash and eventually got a gig as a barback at one of San Francisco's top spots, even though he had already been bartending for a couple of years. His mentor didn't think he was quite ready for prime time just yet, so on his nights off, Justin set out to prove him wrong. He picked up some shifts at other bars and focused on being the best he could be. It didn't take long for everyone to take notice, and soon he had the top shifts at the top bar.

Getting "made" was great, but the part of bartending that really spoke to Justin was, as he told me, "the camaraderie I have with the people I work with and working a shift together to give our guests a great experience." But bartending isn't easy, so he loves to travel to reset. "My girlfriend and I just get in the car and travel up and down the coast of California," he says. I think that sounds like the perfect way to strike a balance.

YUKON SUCKER PUNCH

- 1½ oz. Jack Daniel's Single Barrel Rye
- ½ oz. Mr Black Cold Brew Coffee Liqueur
- ½ oz. Carpano Antica
- ½ oz. crème de cacao
- ¼ oz. crème de cassis
- 2 dashes orange bitters

Combine Jack Daniel's, Mr Black, Carpano, and bitters in a mixing glass and stir. Pour into a coupe. Combine crème de cacao, crème de cassis, and 1 tablespoon of sugar and dry shake until you have whipped cream. Top cocktail with whipped cream, then grate dark chocolate and express an orange peel over the glass. Add 1 spray of Scotch and garnish with a blackberry.

Dalton GRANT

NOMINATED BY: **ME**

Behind the bar with Keith McCarthy and Dalton back in the day. I heart these guys.

KANSAS CITY SHUFFLE

* 3 fingers Jack Daniel's Single Barrel Rye
* 10–12 shakes Jack Daniel's Tennessee Cocktail Bitters

Pour the rye into a whiskey glass over a big, fancy ice cube. Add the bitters and spin the cube around a few times to mix and get things rocking down there.

DALTON IS NO LONGER WORKING BEHIND A BAR, but that hasn't stopped him from enjoying cocktails or me from loving him any less. He was my first new hire at my last gig, and we spent over a decade working together while humbly calling ourselves the Dream Team. I looked forward to every shift with Dalton. No matter how busy it got or how close a night came to going off the rails, it never did. Dalton knew how to work and always got the job done. We had a ton of fun behind the bar, but never at the expense of the guest.

Well, almost never. The exception was if you were a really awful, finger-snappin', shirt sleeve-grabbing, "don't you know who I am?" type of guest. In that scenario, you got Bus Tubbed, meaning we never used a bus tub and let all of your dirty glasses, plates, and crumbs pile up around you. We would clean up after your date, just not you. It was our not-so-subtle way of teaching some manners.

One time our GM, *Jack's Black Book* alum Keith McCarthy, called us to the office to go over our Secret Shoppers report. He read, "Dalton and ET worked really well together. They had total control of the bar. The only odd thing we noticed was that they kept an extremely clean bar except for in front of one guest. Other than that, perfect." We just apologized for missing it. I mean, we could have said, "Hey, that guy was awful, so we Bus Tubbed him," but it sounded like a can of worms better left closed.

Since leaving the bar, Dalton has earned a gold record through his music career and has also become one of the most beloved yoga instructors in L.A. I'm not gonna say he owes all of his success to me, but I'm not *not* gonna say it either.

all we need is love

After sharing what I love about these bartenders, I thought it would be fun to give them a chance to show some love too. Read on for more about the people, places, and things that capture their hearts.

Aleahia THOMPSON

NOMINATED BY: LEONARD LOPP

What do you love about working behind the stick? I love facilitating a good time for people. I think food and drinks are some of life's greatest pleasures, and being able to use that to lighten a person's day means a lot. Life is too difficult to not sit back and enjoy a drink, so I love being able to make that easier. I'm a woman of merriment!

What do you love about the person who nominated you? Leonard has always been a person who I could feel at ease around, even before I ever really talked to him very much (which doesn't really happen often)! At a time when I'd just started to work in hospitality, if I ever felt uneasy or isolated or looked down upon, he was always one of the people in the industry who never let me feel too out of place. I love his easygoing demeanor and ability to be unapologetically himself, and I've always appreciated his ability to be both serious and genuine about his work and the people around him while also being very unpretentious and casual. He's a chill dude! <3

Barry WRIGHT

NOMINATED BY: ASHLEE LAFAYETTE

What does love mean to you? Love is showing up for people. It's vulnerability; it's bringing each other up; it's a wound whose scar is a memory of warmth.

What do you love about the person who nominated you? Ash is my work wife. She is a total badass behind the bar and works with care and compassion for anyone who walks through the door.

Sebastian "Bash" WILLIAMS

NOMINATED BY: MICHAEL NEFF

What do you love about the person who nominated you? Watching and learning from him as well as the rebel vibe I would say Neff and I share.

What do you love about this industry? The fact that bartenders who shape their social atmospheres at their workplace are starting to open their own concepts and successfully use their influence to etch their energy into the cocktail culture of Houston.

Bash wanted to do this photo shoot at his favorite spot in Houston and get some pics with the owner as a little extra "thank you." Spreading the love!

Brenon Mykal STUART

NOMINATED BY: CLINT "SPOTTY" SPOTLESON

What do you love about your city? Phoenix is kind of a crazy, unique city in terms of opportunity. It is diverse and sprawling, but it is still so far behind the big cities in terms of food and beverage. I love being a part of a community of passionate people who are really putting their skills and efforts into making Phoenix great. I love waking up every day wondering where the next best bar is going to open up or who's going to serve something that is going to blow my mind. Everyone knows you can find a great meal and good experience on any corner in Chicago or London, but I love that Phoenix is just finding its roots — and I love being a part of the group of people who are planting their roots here.

What do you love about the person who nominated you? Spotty is a true industry OG out here in Phoenix despite deserting us for Vegas a few years back. Besides just being able to crank out delicious drinks, Spotty has an intensity and passion that is palpable. When I first saw this dude behind the stick, I couldn't keep a smile off my face while watching him work the bar and his well. He makes "craft cocktails" more about the fun than the craft — and not for a lack of the latter. He takes the pretentiousness out of the craft and makes your experience about more than just what's in your glass. Outside of the bar, Spotty is one of those people you can't help but wanna do shit with. He's hospitality-minded through and through, with the energy to keep everyone going for way more hours than you'd ever want to admit.

Laron ROLAND

NOMINATED BY: TUTU ADETOMIWA

In the past year, what has been your biggest source of love? While juggling new procedures to keep myself and my guests safe, I did have one rock. I am an extremely diehard Taylor Swift fan, which led to her inspiring my cocktail, the Midas Touch. She has a lyric that says, "I once believed love would be burning red, but it's golden." My love for her has gotten me through an unexpectedly rough year, and in turn, I used her perception of love to inspire my cocktail.

What do you love about Jack Daniel's? As a gay man, I have always noticed its involvement with Pride and making people across sexualities, genders, and races unite under the common love of drinking. The #flavorsofpride initiative was specifically inspiring because it highlighted that love has no boundaries. We can all love a great whiskey in unity.

What do you love about the person who nominated you? She is the most motivated, determined, headstrong person one could meet while also maintaining a glowing heart and contagious smile that affects anyone in a room with her. It is an honor to know her, to be her friend, and to be her peer.

Demi NATOLI

NOMINATED BY: JOAQUÍN SIMÓ

What do you love about the person who nominated you? Although we have only met in person a couple of times, he is one of the most thoughtful people I know. Joaquín goes out of his way — like really out of his way — for others when he doesn't have to, and that is remarkable.

In the past year, what has been your biggest source of love? Our bar team has such an incredible bond that I wouldn't change for the world. I know that we can go to each other for advice, accountability, and love. It has been a really challenging year in and out of work. No matter what, we have the support of each other and actually care for each other.

Andres NARANJO

NOMINATED BY: DAVE NEWMAN

What do you love about your city? What's not to love about Honolulu?! I love the people and culture; it reminds me a lot of Mexico, where my family is from. The beaches are beautiful and the food is fantastic. I can't imagine living anywhere else.

Ashlyn "Ash" MIYASAKI

NOMINATED BY: CARI HAH

What do you love about Jack Daniel's? I love that Jack Daniel's is part Sinatra class, part rock and roll, and part American whiskey romance. It's simultaneously approachable and iconic.

What do you love about the person who nominated you? I love Cari Hah for her absolute commitment to everything she does. She cares so intensely about her profession and the people around her on both sides of the bar. Her work ethic and standards are really something to behold. On a personal level, I am endlessly grateful for her as a friend and someone I can always trust for an honest opinion.

Justin LEATHERS

NOMINATED BY: WILL CUTTING

In the past year, what has been your biggest source of love? My beautiful girlfriend, Madison.

What do you love about the person who nominated you? William Cutting is my brother that I never expected to have. He has this talent of bringing you right up when you feel most down. He's also my favorite person to golf with!

Daniel MALOTT

NOMINATED BY: NATALIE BOVIS

What do you love about your city? Albuquerque is such a unique place. There is so much culture and diversity here — amazingly talented artists and designers as well as creatively inspiring people from all walks of life. It's a bit of a hidden gem out here, but we like it that way!

What do you love about the person who nominated you? You couldn't possibly ask for a better mentor than Natalie Bovis. She has so much knowledge and experience and she genuinely cares about sharing it with others. She organizes a yearly event called the NM Cocktails & Culinary Festival, which brings in people from all over the country and helps bartenders and chefs from New Mexico make connections, share ideas, and show off their skills to a wider audience! She is truly a kind soul and a wonderful person.

Amanda HOUGHTALING

NOMINATED BY: CHAD MICHAEL GEORGE

What do you love about the person who nominated you? CMG is one of the most brutally honest people I know, and I really love that.

What do you love about this industry? The humility, the passion, the drive to take care of others... There are so many things I love about this industry and I feel grateful every single day to be a part of it.

Kenny JONES

NOMINATED BY: JACQUES BEZUIDENHOUT

What do you love about the person who nominated you? I love Jacques' knowledge and his approach to cocktails and bartending. That man is a wizard!

What do you love about this industry? I love the rush of having a full bar on a busy night and crushing it! I also love creating and making cocktails that put smiles on faces.

Peter HANNAH

NOMINATED BY: JOAQUÍN SIMÓ

What do you love about this industry? The first time I stepped behind the bar to work, I was 16 in Lancashire, England, at a pub called The Sandpiper. It was absolute love at first pint! I find a great deal of enjoyment these days in tiny details, like noticing if a guest is left-handed so I can serve them from that side or setting down two napkins if I notice they always pick the first one up anyway. They're things I hope people don't even notice, but that makes things a little more seamless.

In the past year, what has been your biggest source of love? My kids – they've been the biggest driver for me in everything I do.

What do you love about the person who nominated you? Joaquín Simó is obviously a behemoth in our industry and someone I've only met twice, rather fleetingly. He's a wonderful, encyclopedic guy who I'd listen to anywhere. He's hilarious, charismatic, and very giving of his time, and that's a wonderful trait. The fact that someone like that would remember me and nominate me for something like this means a great deal.

Joy FIGUEROA

NOMINATED BY: TONY ABOU-GANIM

In the past year, what has been your biggest source of love? My parents. Even miles away, their love has always been present and kept me pushing forward. They are my constant reminder that love has no limits when it's true.

What do you love about the person who nominated you? Tony is a force that leads with kindness and heart. He constantly volunteers and gives time and money to different charities the whole year. His cocktails are known around the world, but his heart has solidified him as one of the most loved mentors in our city, if not *the* most loved. I am happy and proud to be a part of all projects that he is involved in, and I am so honored to be nominated by this man who I admire and love with all my heart.

Thomas ESLINGER

NOMINATED BY: ZACH PATTERSON

What do you love about working behind the stick? It's full of endless chances to learn and to be creative, and that keeps me excited and loving my time behind the bar every day.

What do you love about this industry? The community — both the community at large and the community that is created among the team behind every bar. The bond between the crew, working together in the weeds and getting through the shit, night after night. The experience of working as a team behind the bar builds bonds that last a lifetime. I feel very lucky to be part of such a strong and tight-knit industry.

Ally DEVELLIS

NOMINATED BY: YAEL VENGROFF

What do you love about your city? Throughout the pandemic, I've been working with the Los Angeles nonprofit No Us Without You to help provide food security to undocumented colleagues in the service industry. L.A. has really shown up for us and helped us grow from helping 30 families weekly to 1,700 and counting. This truly has been a humanitarian crisis, and to see everyone from chefs, local business owners, activists, educators, fellow hospitality workers, and local and national brands to council members, journalists, filmmakers, actors, and musicians reach out to help our cause makes me proud to be part of this city. The love has felt really tangible in that sense.

What do you love about the person who nominated you? There isn't much that I don't love about Yael. We share the same birthday and birth year, so our connection felt very comfortable very quickly once we met. She is one of the most driven people that I know who manages to juggle multiple projects and artistic endeavors while somehow still making me feel like my time is valuable to her. I'm glad our paths crossed and feel genuinely thankful to have a friend like her in my life.

LeeAnne BURK

NOMINATED BY: TRAVIS SANDERS

What do you love about Jack Daniel's? The new initiative to not only promote diversity but create programs to advance leadership for people of color in the whiskey industry! It's about time we get more diversity in whiskey, and I can't wait to see how it might influence the whiskeys of the future.

What do you love about the person who nominated you? Man, this guy has layers: loves the opera, vacations in the jungle alone, studied astrophysics, and will get a tattoo of a T-Rex shaking a cocktail, just because. He is so supportive of his friends and the bar community and is just a cool dude in general. I am proud to call him a friend, even when he thinks I know what or who Tolkien is.

Dalton GRANT

NOMINATED BY: ME

In the past year, what has been your biggest source of love? My wife. My dog, Rocco, has been stepping up lately as well.

What do you love about the person who nominated you? Where do I start? ET is his generation's Arthur Fonzarelli. He's one of my favorite people on the planet. We were behind the bar for a decade together.

Greg BUSHIN

NOMINATED BY: MIA MASTROIANNI

What do you love about Jack Daniel's? I love introducing people to whiskey through Gentleman Jack. I love finishing a bottle and thinking about who I shared drinks with, likely over video chat lately. I love that it's like having a little piece of Tennessee — the water and grains from the land — transported to me wherever I am.

What do you love about the person who nominated you? Mia Mastroianni is not the life of the party: She *is* the party. It's rare to meet someone who is popular and funny and has a commanding presence but is also very kind to everyone they meet and really pays attention to everyone they talk to. I think that I could go shopping at a drug store for paperclips with her and somehow that would end up being a great time and we'd be sharing an inside joke with the checkout person before we left. Did I mention she is also a constant inspiration to take my cocktail knowledge and skills to the next level? Because she is.

Michael BERRY

NOMINATED BY: LAYLA LINN SOULEK

What do you love about your city? I love how diverse Albuquerque is and New Mexico in general. When it comes to people, cultural heritage and history, beautiful landscapes and geography, climate, architecture, food and drinks, and just things to do in general, I have never been anywhere more diverse.

What do you love about the person who nominated you? Ms. Layla Linn Soulek is so amazing! I have only had the pleasure to meet and talk with her a handful of times, but every time I was left with a sense of such selflessness, care, and pride in all she does. She is so supportive of not only the community she lives in but the industry as a whole and wants to see everyone succeed. It is not every day you get to meet someone as awesome as her!

Adam ALY

NOMINATED BY: DAVE FLATMAN

What do you love about Jack Daniel's? Oh, Jack Daniel's! The thing I love most is that it reminds me of my dad. Throughout his life, I held the tradition of gifting him a cigar and bottle of Gentleman Jack on his birthday. Today, I drink it in his memory, and it gives me the warm fuzzies inside. I'll always love Jack Daniel's because it really brought us together and holds a deep nostalgia for me.

What do you love about the person who nominated you? Dave is such a kind and genuine person. He's always eager to help people in the industry and to connect with people. I love that he has a strong connection to his family. I always enjoy seeing him post about his weekly family pizza nights because 1) pizza is the best and 2) it's cute as fuck.

Rodrigo "Rigo" ARANGUREN

NOMINATED BY: PATTY BUATHONG

What do you love about your city? The ever-changing tapestry that is Houston always amazes me. I think that as a community, Houston has a lot of love for its inhabitants. They endure and thrive together through every crisis.

What do you love about the person who nominated you? I have an immense amount of respect for Patty. Her determination and her focus on her career are just inspiring to watch. She engages with you and makes you feel part of something — and that's what makes a great leader.

Jes NEY and Alex ALBERICO

NOMINATED BY: RYAN PUCKETT

In the past year, what has been your biggest source of love?

JES: My life partner, Alex. We up and moved, changing our whole life during a pandemic. I would have not survived 2020 without his support, unconditional love, and understanding. Also, huge shout-out to our friends and family for supporting every decision we have made and loving us fully.

ALEX: My biggest source of love this year has been my girlfriend, Jes; my family; and my quarantine friend group. Without them, I don't know if I would have been able to get through 2020.

What do you love about the person who nominated you?

JES: Ryan Puckett has the biggest heart and most contagious laugh and is always ready to put others before himself. He cares a lot about others and the love he shares is meaningful, beautiful, and true.

ALEX: He is just the biggest bear of love and one of the most loyal people I know. He will always do anything he can to support someone he loves.

Napier "Naps" BULANAN

NOMINATED BY:
JESSE PETERSON

In the past year, what has been your biggest source of love? My husband! We got married on a Wednesday afternoon in June during the pandemic, actually. He's been in the bar industry for ten years and has an incredible palate. We regularly consult with each other when workshopping cocktails. He sees me and regularly reminds me to stop and appreciate my accomplishments.

What do you love about your city? Oakland is one of the last strongholds of the Bay Area culture I grew up in — hella diverse, creative, and radical. Oakland keeps it trill and it won't let you forget where you are. It builds community, holds you accountable, and supports your hustle. I have such a deep and profound love for Oakland.

Lane COMPTON

NOMINATED BY: DAMIAN WINDSOR

In the past year, what has been your biggest source of love? My wife, who wasn't my wife yet at the start of this year. I met her working behind the bar about ten years ago. Getting married this year did not go as we had planned, of course, but we were not going to let anything stand in the way of making that happen, so we eloped. Now we hope to celebrate with everyone on our one-year anniversary.

What do you love about the person who nominated you? He taught me how to bartend about ten years ago. I love that he honors the craft. Just as someone had to have passed it down to him, he has done that for me and continues to carry me under his wings from time to time. He's a standup guy — super talented and continually passionate.

Mikol MCKEON

NOMINATED BY: JEREMY HART

In the past year, what has been your biggest source of love? My growing family! This past year has taken a toll on all of us, to say the least. Being out of work...not seeing friends... it's hard. Fortunately for me, I had my son, Ki, and my lovely girlfriend, Chilly (who is currently carrying our daughter!). Things got tough at times, but the love and support they provide every single day motivate me to keep pushing forward.

What do you love about the person who nominated you? I love that he is who he says he is — he's as authentic as they come. I've really learned a lot from working with Jeremy and more from just being his friend.

Sacha DURHAM

NOMINATED BY: VENA EDMONDS

What do you love about your city? I love my city of Philadelphia. The City of Brotherly Love and Sisterly Affection. A beautiful city filled with cobblestone streets where our founding fathers walked. A city filled with wonderful, distinctive neighborhoods. Let's not forget cheesesteaks, soft pretzels, the Liberty Bell, the Mummers Parade, *Rocky*... And we are diehard sports fans! E-A-G-L-E-S! I'm really lucky to be in the industry in Philly. It's a family here. We support each other and we definitely spread the love.

Rori ROBINSON

NOMINATED BY: KEYATTA MINCEY PARKER

What do you love about the person who nominated you? I was nominated by Keyatta Mincey Parker, and while I'm extremely grateful, I wasn't at all surprised. From the first day that we started working together closely, she has been a huge champion in my corner. I absolutely love that her top priority is growing *with* her community, not above or without it. She's always shared opportunities with me and has given me major encouragement throughout the journey of launching my businesses.

What do you love about your city? I adore the landscape of Atlanta. The trees and heavy forestry give it major city-country-city vibes. My partner and I are lucky enough to live in an area with expansive backyards and lots of wildlife, and my relationship with and appreciation of nature have expanded as a result.

“AND IN THE END, THE LOVE YOU TAKE IS EQUAL TO THE LOVE YOU MAKE.”

— John Lennon & Paul McCartney
(and my mom’s favorite line from a Beatles song)