

Chicago Mainstay

At Lost Lake, Paul McGee illustrates why he's the Windy City's favorite bartender

Since landing in Chicago in 2008, Paul McGee has proven to be an invaluable part of the city's cocktail and hospitality landscape. He helped open The Whistler in Logan Square in 2008 before joining the team at Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises to open Three Dots and a Dash in River North in 2013. Both bars are lauded as two of Chicago's best, and McGee's time at them earned him numerous accolades.

In early 2015, McGee left Lettuce Entertain You to open a bar of his own. He and partner Shelby Allison teamed up with concept and project development company Land and Sea Dept. to open Lost Lake, a tropical bar in Chicago's Avondale neighborhood. In addition to co-owning Lost Lake, McGee serves as beverage director for Land and Sea, overseeing all four bar spaces on the second floor of the Chicago Athletic Association hotel, as well as stand-alone bars Lonesome Rose and Golden Teardrops. "Each property has a distinct beverage program, from simple three-ingredient cocktails with split bases at Chicago Athletic Association to layered flavors of tropical cocktails at Lost Lake," McGee says, noting that his love for rum and American whiskey are among the common threads found throughout his concepts.



Though each of his concepts is unique, Paul McGee channels his love of rum and American whiskey at all of them, including tiki haven Lost Lake.

Lost Lake has become a destination for tiki cocktail enthusiasts. "We evoke the style of the early days of tiki, a la Don the Beachcomber in Hollywood in the mid-1930s—lots of flora and fauna with nautical touches," McGee says, adding that the cocktail menu includes both classic tiki drinks and modern interpretations (drinks are \$8-\$13 for single serve; \$30-\$50 for punches). Two of his personal favorites include the Lost Lake (\$13), featuring Appleton Signature Blend Jamaican rum, Campari aperitif, Luxardo Maraschino liqueur, lime and pineapple juices, and house-made passion fruit syrup; and the Poipu Beach Boogie Board (\$13), blending Rittenhouse rye whiskey, Plantation O.F.T.D. rum, Luxardo Maraschino, lemon and pineapple juices, house-made pomegranate syrup, guava purée, and Angostura bitters.

"When we opened Lost Lake, we wanted it to be a neighborhood venue with a friendly, knowledgeable staff that makes fantastic tropical drinks and transports guests to another place and time," McGee says. "It's been tremendously rewarding to create this space and see it evolve."

Sally Kral

PHOTOS BY CLAYTON HAUCK

Paul McGee's Recipes



LOST LAKE

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 ounces Appleton Signature Blend Jamaican rum;
- ¼ ounce Campari aperitif;
- ¼ ounce Luxardo Maraschino liqueur;
- ¾ ounce Small Hand Foods Passion Fruit syrup¹;
- ¾ ounce lime juice;
- ½ ounce pineapple juice;
- Edible orchid;
- Pineapple wedge;
- Orange peel.

RECIPE:

In a cocktail shaker, combine rum, aperitif, liqueur, syrup, and juices. Add 1 cup crushed ice and shake. Pour all contents into a tiki mug or Collins glass and top with additional crushed ice. Garnish with orchid, pineapple wedge, and orange peel.



POIPU BEACH BOOGIE BOARD

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 ½ ounces Rittenhouse rye whiskey;
- ½ ounce Plantation O.F.T.D. rum;
- ¼ ounce Luxardo Maraschino liqueur;
- 1 ounce lemon juice;
- 1 ounce pineapple juice;
- ¾ ounce Small Hand Foods Grenadine²;
- ½ ounce guava purée;
- 1 dash Angostura bitters;
- Edible orchid;
- Mint bunch;
- Lemon peel.

RECIPE:

In a cocktail shaker, combine whiskey, rum, liqueur, juices, syrup, guava, and bitters. Add 1 cup crushed ice and shake. Pour all contents into a tiki mug and top with additional crushed ice. Garnish with orchid, mint, and lemon peel.

¹McGee uses house-made passion fruit syrup, but Small Hand Foods Passion Fruit syrup is a suitable substitute.

²McGee uses house-made pomegranate syrup, but Small Hand Foods Grenadine, which is made with pomegranate, is a suitable substitute.