

Globe Trotter

Shingo Gokan brings his worldly cocktail knowledge to Himitsu in Atlanta

He may be from Japan, but Shingo Gokan has had as much influence on the modern U.S. mixology scene as any native-born bartender. After moving to New York City in 2006, he ran the bar program at the Japanese-style speakeasy Angel's Share—widely considered the bar that sparked the cocktail renaissance of the early 2000s—for ten years. During that time, the accolades racked up. In 2012, he won the Bacardi Global Legacy Cocktail Competition, competing against 10,000 bartenders from 26 countries. This win earned him international recognition, taking him to more than 30 countries to teach master classes and guest-bartend at historically renowned venues. In fact, he was the first-ever guest bartender at the famed Savoy Hotel in London.

In 2015—while Gokan was still working at Angel's Share and had just opened his own bar, Speak Low, in Shanghai—he caught the eye of the ownership team behind a forthcoming speakeasy in Atlanta called Himitsu. “They were putting together the concept and flew to New York City to meet me, and we hit it off immediately,” Gokan says. A few weeks later, he was hired as creative director, responsible for crafting all signature and seasonal cocktails and training the staff.



As creative director at Atlanta bar Himitsu—connected to high-end sushi restaurant Umi—Shingo Gokan focuses on *omotenashi*, the art of hospitality.

Himitsu, which means “secret” in Japanese, is a reservations-only speakeasy found behind an unmarked door that requires a passcode to enter. It's connected to and owned by the same team behind Umi, a high-end sushi restaurant and noted celebrity hotspot. Himitsu aims to embody the Japanese art of hospitality called *omotenashi*, meaning the utmost care is taken to accommodate and serve guests. “It's all about creating unique, exceptional drinks and providing the best possible service behind the bar,” Gokan says.

Gokan's cocktail menu at Himitsu (drinks are \$16-\$21) comprises revolving seasonal selections and signature drinks that range in style but are all tied together with Japanese ingredients and flavors. Signature drinks include his Yuzu (\$17), blending Lunazul Blanco Tequila, light agave syrup, yuzu juice, and shiso leaves, and his Kemuri (\$21; recipe below). Though Gokan's attention is now split among several bars around the world—in addition to his role at Himitsu, he owns three bars in Shanghai and one in Tokyo—his commitment to *omotenashi* is a common link on every menu he touches. “The classic Japanese approach to bartending, plus my own touch and imagination, together create the Shingo Gokan style,” he says.

Sally Kral

PHOTOS BY JUSTIN DRISCOLL

Shingo Gokan's Recipes*



YUZU

INGREDIENTS:

- 45-ml. Lunazul Blanco Tequila;
- 21-ml. light agave syrup;
- 23-ml. yuzu juice;
- 5 shiso leaves;
- Micro shiso leaves;
- Mishima yukari shiso salt, for rim.

RECIPE:

Lightly rim a double Old Fashioned glass with yukari shiso salt and load with a large ice cube. In an ice-filled cocktail shaker, combine Tequila, agave, yuzu, and shiso. Shake vigorously and double strain into glass. Garnish with micro shiso leaves.



KEMURI

INGREDIENTS:

- 30-ml. Suntory Toki blended whisky;
- 10-ml. Bénédictine liqueur;
- 10-ml. Hartley & Gibson's Oloroso Sherry;
- 10-ml. Kijoshu sake;
- 1 dash The Bitter Truth Jerry Thomas' Own Decanter bitters;
- Ground cinnamon and clove mix, for smoking.

RECIPE:

Place ground cinnamon and clove mix on a wooden stave, torch the mix, and cover with a snifter glass. In an ice-filled mixing glass, combine whisky, liqueur, Sherry, sake, and bitters, and stir. Remove smoked snifter from wooden stave and strain cocktail into snifter immediately.

*At Himitsu, these recipes are batched in large formats ahead to allow the flavors to rest and marry. The measurements provided here are approximated for individual serving.