

Creative Control

Adriana Ramos lets her imagination run wild at Employees Only in Los Angeles

In 2015, Adriana Ramos was working in foodservice while attending community college in Long Beach, California when she decided to take mixology classes. “I entered the world of bartending on a whim,” she says. “I enjoyed it more than I thought I would, especially when I realized how much creativity is involved.” From there she took her first bartending gig at an English pub in Los Angeles, where she worked while bartending part-time at other cocktail bars throughout the city. “In late 2019, the bar manager at Employees Only in West Hollywood came into the cocktail bar where I was working,” Ramos says. “He mentioned that he was hiring and that he would love to have me in to check it out. Little did I know, he had already decided to bring me on board.”

Ramos started as the bar manager’s apprentice before taking over his role when he left. She is now responsible for curating the cocktail menu (all drinks are \$17), as well as setting standards for the bar. “Employees Only is an elevated cocktail bar that features



Adriana Ramos began bartending in 2015 and has since risen to become bar manager of Employees Only in West Hollywood.

classic cocktails in addition to several unique drinks,” she says. The menu covers all the craft cocktail bases, from modern takes on traditional builds like the Manhattan to original concoctions like Ramos’ Scout’s Honor, which comprises Monkey Shoulder blended malt Scotch, Evan Williams Bourbon, Branca Menta amaro, Giffard crème de cacao liqueur, Demerara sugar, Regans’ No. 6 Orange bitters, and citrus cream.

“I like to make funky cocktails that are culinary-driven,” Ramos notes. “When I can, I try to use 100% of each fresh ingredient.” This approach to cocktail-making is on display in her Midnight Manifesto, which comprises raisin-infused Clément rum agricole, house-made carrot shrub and walnut orgeat syrup, and lemon juice. “I love that I can be creative in this role,” Ramos adds. “I can take a drink that may not be so special and turn it into something amazing. It’s like being in a test kitchen for cocktails.”

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Sally Kral

PHOTOS BY (TOP): COURTESY EMPLOYEES ONLY; (BELOW): ELLIOT MONTERO

Adriana Ramos’ Recipes



SCOUT’S HONOR

INGREDIENTS:

- 1½ ounces Monkey Shoulder blended malt Scotch;
- ½ ounces Evan Williams Bourbon;
- ½ ounce Branca Menta amaro;
- ¼ ounce Giffard crème de cacao liqueur;
- ¼ ounce Demerara sugar;
- 2 dashes Regans’ No. 6 Orange bitters;
- Citrus cream float¹;
- Dark chocolate shavings.

Recipe:

In an ice-filled mixing glass, stir together whiskies, amaro, liqueur, sugar, and bitters until chilled. Strain into a chilled coupe glass and garnish with a float of citrus cream and dark chocolate shavings.



MIDNIGHT MANIFESTO

INGREDIENTS:

- 1½ ounces raisin-infused Clément rum agricole²;
- 1 ounce carrot shrub³;
- ½ ounce walnut orgeat syrup⁴;
- ¼ ounce lemon juice;
- Walnut brittle;
- Ground cinnamon and nutmeg.

Recipe:

In a pebble ice-filled cocktail shaker, combine rum agricole, shrub, syrup, and lemon juice. Whip shake, then pour the entire drink into a Collins glass. Top with more pebble ice and garnish with walnut brittle and ground cinnamon and nutmeg.

¹ Finely zest 1 lemon and 1 small orange into 1 quart heavy whipping cream. Mix completely. Before floating on cocktail, whip it up for about 10 seconds to aerate and fluff up so it’s easier to float.

² Combine ½ cup raisins with one 750-ml. bottle rum and allow to infuse for 3 days, then strain.

³ Heat 8 cups water, 4 cups sugar, and 4 teaspoons salt until sugar and salt dissolve. Let cool completely, then add 4 cups apple cider vinegar and 8 cups carrot juice. Store in the refrigerator for up to 3 weeks.

⁴ Blend 4 cups walnuts in a food processor until finely ground, then set aside. Heat 3 cups sugar and 2½ cups water until sugar dissolves, then boil for 3 minutes. Add walnuts and simmer for another 5 minutes—do not boil this time. Let sit for 3-8 hours. Strain through a fine mesh strainer and add 1 ounce Wray & Nephew White Overproof rum. Store in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.