

Dynamic Duo

Gabriel Orta and Elad Zvi are taking the U.S. hospitality scene by storm

Gabriel Orta and Elad Zvi were working separately as bartenders in Miami when they joined forces in 2009 to create a beverage consulting company called Bar Lab. “When we started, there weren’t any other companies of this kind in Florida,” Zvi says. “Our vision was to focus on bringing better bar programs to the Miami scene.” Their first venture was in 2012 when they debuted the Broken Shaker in the Sydell Group-owned Freehand Miami hotel. Originally intended as a 30-day pop-up concept, the bar was so popular that the Sydell Group gave it a permanent space in the hotel.

This was only the young company’s beginning; they soon formed a partnership with the Sydell Group and its Freehand hotel chain. By 2015, Bar Lab had opened a second Broken Shaker in the Freehand Chicago and added the Freehand Miami’s 27 Restaurant to its portfolio, evolving from a beverage consulting company to a one-stop hospitality management group. In 2016, Orta and Zvi opened a third Broken Shaker at the Freehand Los Angeles and added The Anderson in Miami. At the Freehand Los Angeles, Bar Lab also oversees The Exchange restaurant and Rudolph’s Bar & Tea in the lobby. In 2018, the group opened a Broken Shaker in the Freehand New York.



Elad Zvi (left) and Gabriel Orta founded Bar Lab in 2009, opening their first Miami bar in 2012. Now, the duo runs seven venues.

Zvi is a native of Israel while Orta was raised in Colombia and Hawaii; their backgrounds and appreciation for different cultures are clearly demonstrated at their properties. From the Miami-specific ingredients and flavors at the original Broken Shaker to the Tel Aviv-inspired food and drinks at The Exchange, Orta and Zvi seek to transport guests to a different time and place at each concept. “We care about the quality of ingredients and service at each property,” Zvi says.

Though Orta and Zvi are no longer behind the bar, they oversee cocktail creation at each venue, including such drinks as the Dragon Juice (\$13) at the Broken Shaker Miami, comprising Plymouth gin, Chinola passion fruit liqueur, dragon fruit juice, house-made lavender syrup, and Scappy’s Cardamom bitters, and the Pom & Agave (\$13) at The Exchange, featuring Illegal mezcal, pomegranate and lemon juices, house-made harissa agave syrup, and house-made sumac soda. Even with new projects, the duo remain dedicated to each distinct venue and staff. “The most remarkable experience has been seeing the next generation of bartenders, cooks, and managers take their careers to the next level,” Orta says. **mw**

Sally Kral

Bar Lab’s Recipes



DRAGON JUICE

INGREDIENTS:

2 ounces Plymouth gin;
1 ounce Chinola passion fruit liqueur;
2 ounces dragon fruit juice;
½ ounce lavender syrup¹;
Dash Scappy’s Cardamom bitters;
Blood orange wheel;
Rosemary sprig.

RECIPE:

In a cocktail shaker, combine gin, liqueur, juice, syrup, and bitters. Add ice and shake vigorously. Strain into an ice-filled highball glass. Garnish with a blood orange wheel and rosemary sprig.



POM & AGAVE

INGREDIENTS:

1½ ounces Illegal mezcal;
2 ounces fresh-squeezed pomegranate juice;
1 ounce lemon juice;
1 ounce harissa agave syrup²;
Splash sumac soda³;
Lime wheel.

RECIPE:

In a cocktail shaker, combine mezcal, juices, and agave. Fill with ice and shake vigorously. Strain into an ice-filled highball glass. Top with sumac soda and garnish with a lime wheel.

¹Bring ½ cup lavender buds and 1 cup water to a boil. Add 1 cup sugar, let dissolve, then simmer for 2 minutes. Let cool, then bottle and store in fridge.

²Add 1 cup agave and 1 cup water to a pot and bring to a boil. Add 1 tablespoon harissa powder. Simmer for 5 minutes. Let cool and then bottle.

³Combine 1 tablespoon sumac powder, 1 liter club soda, and ¼ ounce lemon juice. Shake gently before serving.