

Hometown Hospitality

At Fable Lounge in Nashville, Tennessee, Ellen Talbot's passion is on display

Although Ellen Talbot's career in hospitality technically dates back to scooping ice cream and gelato as a teenager, it wasn't until the Nashville, Tennessee native moved back to her hometown after college in 2013 that she started seeing a future for herself in the industry. Over the course of four years, she worked at three of Strategic Hospitality's trendy properties, starting out as a server and eventually moving to bartending. "It was my first experience with craft cocktails, interesting food, and the art of guiding the guest experience," she says. "I've always loved eating and drinking, and I learned that I really love working in the industry too."

Talbot now serves as lead bartender at the craft cocktail-focused Fable Lounge, which opened in January 2020 in Nashville's West End neighborhood. To hear her tell it, the role essentially fell into her lap—"Fable Lounge found me," she says. She was bartending at a downtown hotel restaurant when some of her regulars-turned-friends introduced her to Ben Powell, who was in the process of developing the new bar with his business partner John Dibble. "I immediately knew that this man was up to something interesting," Talbot says. "We chatted after my shift for about an hour and set up a meeting with John. When we all agreed



As lead bartender at Fable Lounge in Nashville, Tennessee, Ellen Talbot showcases spirits and liqueurs in classic and original cocktails.

that our hearts and minds were in the same place and our passions were aligned in hospitality, I quit my job to design Fable Lounge's bar program."

On the lounge's cocktail menu (drinks are \$13-\$16) are mostly familiar classics like the Negroni, Old Fashioned, and Sazerac, but there's also a section devoted to house originals (called "Notions"), featuring such drinks as Talbot's Mercury in Retrograde (\$15), comprising Plantation 5-year-old Barbados rum, J. Rieger Caffè Amaro coffee liqueur, Tempus Fugit Crème de Cacao liqueur, Demerara simple syrup, and Angostura bitters, and her Emotional Intelligence (\$16), blending Fidencio Clásico mezcal, Tempus Fugit Crème de Cacao liqueur, St. Elizabeth allspice dram, lime juice, Regans' No. 6 Orange bitters, and grated nutmeg.

"On our Notions menu, we strive to present interesting ingredients in unique ways to highlight spirits and liqueurs that we're passionate about, and our classic cocktails help offer something for everyone," Talbot notes, pointing out that her ultimate goal is to make her guests happy. "I always joke that I'm an equal opportunist when it comes to recommending drinks—I like to offer everyone something that they'll enjoy."



Sally Kral

PHOTOS BY MANDY REID

Ellen Talbot's Recipes



Mercury In Retrograde

INGREDIENTS:

- 1½ ounces Plantation 5-year-old Barbados rum;
- 1 ounce J. Rieger Caffè Amaro coffee liqueur;
- ½ ounce Tempus Fugit Crème de Cacao liqueur;
- ¼ ounce Demerara simple syrup;
- 3 dashes Angostura bitters;
- Orange peel.

RECIPE:

In an ice-filled mixing glass, combine rum, liqueurs, syrup, and bitters. Stir and strain into a rocks glass over a large ice cube. Garnish with an orange peel.



Emotional Intelligence

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 ounces Fidencio Clásico mezcal;
- ¾ ounce Tempus Fugit Crème de Cacao liqueur;
- ¼ ounce St. Elizabeth allspice dram;
- ¾ ounce lime juice;
- 3 dashes Regans' No. 6 Orange bitters;
- Grated nutmeg.

RECIPE:

In an ice-filled cocktail shaker, combine mezcal, liqueur, allspice dram, lime juice, and bitters. Shake and strain into a rocks glass over a large ice cube. Garnish with grated nutmeg.