

Cocktail Stories

At Pouring Ribbons in New York City, Joaquín Simó's cocktail menu tells a tale

Joaquín Simó entered the food and beverage world right out of college. “After I graduated from Boston University with a degree in English and religion and there were no recruiters pounding down my door, I started working at my local bar,” he says. After two years working the door, followed by two years as a bar back, Simó finally got behind the bar and discovered what it meant to be a good bartender. “I learned how to cut people off so that they’d shake your hand, not throw a fist,” he explains. “I always say I learned how to bartend in Boston, but I learned how to make drinks in New York.”

Indeed, it was when Simó landed in New York City in 2005 that his interests moved to the craft end of things. In 2007, he was part of the opening team at renowned cocktail venue Death & Co., where he developed his skills as a mixologist for five and a half years. “My time there was like grad school,” he says. Then in 2012—from the stage at Tales of the Cocktail’s Spirited Awards, where he was accepting the American Bartender of the Year award—he announced that he would be leaving Death & Co. to open his own bar in the fall. True to his word, Simó and his business partner Jason Cott opened Pouring Ribbons in New York City in September 2012.



At New York City’s Pouring Ribbons, Joaquín Simó blends his mixology skills with his literary background, making sure every cocktail has a narrative arc.

On the Pouring Ribbons cocktail menu (drinks are \$16), Simó combines his skills as a mixologist with his background in English literature. “I believe that a great cocktail has to have a narrative arc: a beginning, middle, and end, from the presentation and aromatics to the palate and finish,” he says. To aid in creating drinks that tell a story, the cocktail menu has an overarching theme that changes twice a year. “When we first opened, we offered house cocktails and classics that changed seasonally, but after three years of that I just got so bored,” Simó says. “That’s when my inner nerd woke up and said, ‘Why don’t we deep-dive on all the weird stuff we like?’”

One recent theme was Trashy TV, which featured Simó’s Honey Boo Boo cocktail, blending Paranubes rum, Verde Momento and Del Maguey Chichicapa mezcals, and house-made calamansi and wildflower honey syrups. Another was Cuba 1958, offering drinks like Simó’s Roar of Yara (recipe below). “The themes are fun and help our staff view drink creation in a different way, furthering their own creativity,” Simó says. “It’s not, ‘I guess we’ll do a pumpkin spice drink since it’s fall.’ We’re thinking outside of that box.”

Sally Kral

Joaquín Simó’s Recipes



HONEY BOO BOO

INGREDIENTS:

- 1¼ ounces Paranubes rum;
- ½ ounce Verde Momento mezcal;
- ¼ ounce Del Maguey Chichicapa mezcal;
- ¾ ounce calamansi syrup¹;
- ½ ounce wildflower honey syrup².

RECIPE:

In a cocktail shaker, combine rum, mezcals, and syrups. Fill with ice and shake vigorously until quite cold. Strain into a honey bear jar or a chilled cocktail glass.



ROAR OF YARA

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 ounce Del Maguey Vida mezcal;
- 1 ounce Cabeza Blanco Tequila;
- ¾ ounce Contratto Bianco vermouth;
- 1 teaspoon Giffard Crème de Fruits de la Passion liqueur;
- ½ teaspoon Rhine Hall Mango brandy;
- Edible orchid flower.

RECIPE:

In a mixing glass, combine mezcal, Tequila, vermouth, liqueur, and brandy. Fill with ice and stir briskly until quite cold. Strain into a rocks glass over fresh ice, preferably a large cube. Garnish with an edible orchid flower.

¹Blend Boiron Kalamansi purée with equal parts (by volume) white sugar until sugar is dissolved.

²Stir together 2 parts local wildflower honey with 1 part hot water until thoroughly combined.

PHOTOS BY (TOP) ERIC MEDSKER; (BOTTOM LEFT) STEVEN LEWIS; (BOTTOM RIGHT) LAURA IRON