

Craft Meets Casual

In Oklahoma City, Kim Dansereau makes high-end cocktails in a laid-back setting

A 31-year veteran of the hospitality industry, Kim Dansereau initially had different career aspirations. “I started waiting tables at 19 and bartending at 20, but then I graduated from the University of Oklahoma with a degree in finance and went to work as a financial planner,” the Oklahoma native says. “I absolutely hated it—office life just wasn’t for me. I missed the hospitality industry and went straight back to it.” From casual eateries and dive bars to fine-dining restaurants and craft cocktail venues, Dansereau worked at them all throughout Oklahoma City over the next several years before deciding she was ready for the next big step: Owning her own restaurant and bar. “When I told my dad I was thinking about going out on my own, he said, ‘It’s about time. You need some money?’” she recalls. “I knew I was ready to be in the industry for the long haul.”

While working as general manager of Cafe Nova, she found the perfect partner for her new business venture in owner Shaun Fiaccone. “We had the same vision of having a casual, chef-driven restaurant that people could afford to eat at more than once a week,” she says. And so the two opened Picasso Café in Oklahoma City’s historic Paseo Arts District in 2009. “Our initial vision has remained the same but has



As partner and spirits director of HumanKind Hospitality, Kim Dansereau (pictured) designed the craft cocktail-driven beverage menu for Picasso Café.

evolved to have a craft cocktail focus and wine program,” Dansereau adds. She and Fiaccone also formed their own hospitality company, HumanKind Hospitality, which operates several Oklahoma City restaurants and bars in addition to Picasso Café.

As partner and spirits director for HumanKind, Dansereau creates the beverage menus for all of the group’s venues, but Picasso Café, including its bar-next-door The Other Room, remains her focus as co-owner. Her cocktail selection at Picasso Café (drinks are \$9-\$12) include classics as well as house originals, such as her Jane Valdez (\$10), blending Cuentacientos mezcal, house-made

grapefruit peppercorn shrub, and house-made vanilla bean syrup, and her Leonardo Disaronno (\$10), featuring Disaronno amaretto, Ferrand 1840 Cognac, house-made lemon syrup, and Bittercube Cherry Bark Vanilla bitters. “I’ve done all styles of bartending but my preference is for craft cocktails, and I think the craft element comes from making syrups, shrubs, and other ingredients from scratch to elevate the spirit,” Dansereau says. “I love that craft bartending allows me to express my creativity. It’s a passion. And seeing the expression of joy on a guest’s face is so satisfying, it’s what you work for—it’s hospitality at its finest.”

Sally Kral

PHOTO BY (TOP) TRANDY COLEMAN

Kim Dansereau’s Recipes



JANE VALDEZ

2 ounces Cuentacientos mezcal;
1 ounce grapefruit peppercorn shrub¹;
½ ounce vanilla bean syrup²;
Brûléed grapefruit quarter.

RECIPE:

In an ice-filled mixing glass, combine mezcal, shrub, and syrup. Stir and strain into an ice-filled double rocks glass. Garnish with a brûléed grapefruit quarter.



LEONARDO DISARONNO

1 ounce Disaronno amaretto;
¾ ounce Ferrand 1840 Cognac;
1 ounce lemon syrup³;
3 drops Bittercube Cherry Bark Vanilla bitters;
Luxardo cherry.

RECIPE:

In an ice-filled mixing glass, combine amaretto, Cognac, syrup, and bitters. Stir and strain into a coupe glass. Garnish with a Luxardo cherry.

¹ In a bowl, combine 4 peeled and quartered grapefruits, 2 cups Sugar in the Raw, and 2 tablespoons fresh cracked peppercorns. Let sit in the fridge until sugar is dissolved and syrup is formed (approximately 3 days). Strain the fruit and add Champagne vinegar to taste. Dansereau uses a 3:1 sugar-to-vinegar ratio.

² Dissolve 2 cups white sugar in 2 cups water and add 1 tablespoon vanilla paste or 1 vanilla bean.

³ Dissolve ¾ cup white sugar in ¾ cup water, then add 1 cup lemon juice.