

PYAW ISSUE #1 March 2024

Interviews with Jade Janzen, Jeff Savage, Juno Wong Clayton, Nick Benyeman, Meaghan Murray



Places You Are Welcome

**Issue #1 Queer
Hospitality As
Resistance**

ABOUT US

PYAW is a Canadian Queer and Trans hospitality Zine founded to highlight Queer excellence in our industry

LAND BACK

This project is created on Treaty 6 territory. This land is a traditional meeting place for indigenous peoples across turtle island, a legacy which carries on to today. It must be understood that truly radical hospitality on stolen land is not possible until that land is returned from the machinery of colonialism. All liberation is connected, we cannot be free until we are all free.

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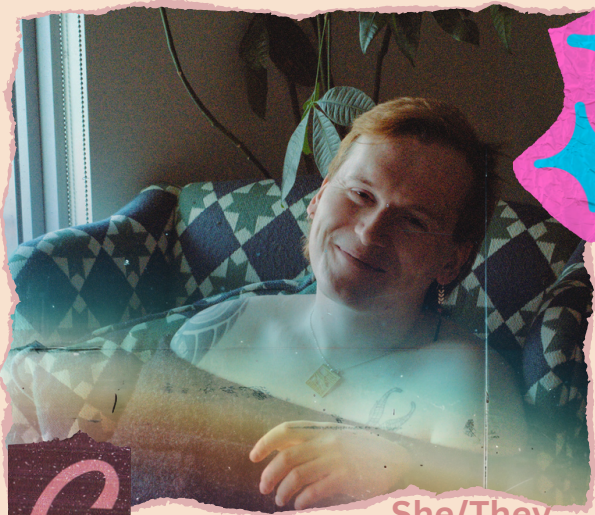
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Calliope
She/They

Introducing PYAW

Hello and welcome to the first issue of Places You Are Welcome. This project is one that is near and dear to my heart and truly is a product of passion and love for our community. The idea behind PYAW has always been to build a space where Queer and Trans voices are front and centre in hospitality discourse and to highlight the excellent work we do.

The ethos behind this zine is to create a community-oriented space for Queer and Trans bartenders across Canada. To build a platform where Queer folks are given the chance to tell their stories, talk about their experiences, and share their art without having to worry about the way it would be received by straight audiences. A place that acts as a community of practice where we can share what works in our spaces or to challenge traditional norms of what is “excellent” in our industry. To showcase that we are here, we exist, and we are building spaces that are making a difference for our community and our industry.

I’ve felt the need for Queer-led spaces in our industry for quite some time. Places that put our needs at the forefront and actively prioritize inclusive and radical policies; places where the work of anti-oppression is being done and voices from every intersection of identity are uplifted. I have always seen the work of hospitality as work that is inherently political, a work which can either reaffirm existing power structures, or radically dismantle them. This industry provides us with the opportunity to radically dismiss social norms or hierarchies and create spaces, while informed by current conditions, reject them and subvert them. To me the position our industry is in presents not only an opportunity but an obligation to work for positive social change.

PYAW is also an attempt towards narrative change. It seems as though almost everywhere I look the only stories I see myself reflected in are fear-mongering op-eds talking about the threat of Trans people. Only rarely do I see Queer and Trans stories told by our community when I look at the news, and when they are told, they’re often stories of pain and loss. PYAW is intended to be a platform for Queer and Trans folks to tell their stories, be they stories of love, loss, joy, or pain, but to have the opportunity to tell them as they see fit through the medium of hospitality.

This first issue comes out in the context of recently announced anti-Trans legislation from the Alberta Government. This legislation is part of a broader campaign across the globe that demonizes Trans folks. As someone who currently calls Alberta home, this legislation strikes my heart directly. I am tired of looking around and not seeing Queer and Trans voices represented in my community. I am tired of transphobic people being placed in positions of power, both in our industry, and in our political systems.

Finally, to borrow from the famous gay Zine *BUTT*, we are a “Faggot Magazine For Interesting Homosexuals.” It is my utmost hope that as our community grows, all who take part can find that community is not out of reach, and that everywhere they look they can find interesting homosexuals.

Thank you for your support of and interest in our first issue.
- Callie

JEFF SAVAGE

SELFISH MENTORSHIP

Jeff Savage (He/Him) is the World Class Canada 2019 Bartender of the Year and Global Runner-up. He is currently based in Vancouver, B.C.

My ultimate thing with anyone, is making sure they feel welcome and comfortable. If I'm judging a competition, I want to know who you are and give you the space where you can present your authenticity. It's such a wonderful gift to see people grow and present themselves in this industry. I want to present the space to be vulnerable and comfortable, but it's selfish because they give back this gift, they give back the opportunity to see them and learn about who they are and watch them grow.

We've all had experiences of the when that space for authenticity isn't there, especially as Queer folks. We have a lot of things that are uncomfortable or shut us down and it's the fucking worst. To have that as something that stymies who you are. It feels to me that if there are spaces where we aren't comfortable, where growth and authenticity aren't encouraged, it feels like stomping on a flower garden. It breaks my heart.

I've had experiences like that, I'm very fortunate to exist and feel comfortable in the body I was born in, and be straight passing in many spaces, but not everyone has that opportunity. It's an important reminder to me, in my body and privilege, to push out my elbows a bit and make sure that the people who don't have those privileges feel comfortable to grow and showcase who they are. That alone is incredibly important for anyone in a position of mentorship or authority to have in the back of their head.

With the day-to-day aspect of mentorship, I've been fortunate to run operations, build spaces, open spaces, all of those things. This week, I'm consulting on the opening of a brand new cocktail bar and we get to have really robust conversations about what it looks like for building space,

security in that space, growing into, and being authentic and excited in that space. You really need to figure out what it means to have people want to come into that space and want to grow into the best version of themselves. You need the intention to make them better than you are behind the bar. Having those conversations really early and really robustly is critical. I've been fortunate to be involved in the opening of four different bars and each time I've had these lessons and these skills, I've been able to push forward to the next. It's a learning process for me as much as anyone else each time.

When the bar is open and you're bringing people in, there's no set formula for mentorship; it's bringing people in, honest connections, and finding people who want it. If you want to mentor someone with no interest in it, can be a little tricky. Believe me, I've tried.

Finding that right connection and growing someone's skill set in ways that work for them is critical. There's no pro-forma molded bartender archetype and that's amazing in our industry. There are so many different types of people who can make amazing hospitality individuals. When it comes to mentorship, it's focusing on how to grow a person into the best iteration of themselves. As a bartender specifically we are asking someone to have a massive skillset. Cocktail creation, speed, cleanliness; all the things behind the bar. But also someone who is giving out a lot of emotional labor as well. Finding ways to let these people shine in all of those aspects. There's no tailor-set forum for that. It's finding places that bring them joy. Allowing them to grow and shine within that.

There's a gentleman named Chris Hannah in New Orleans, he was the U.S. Bartender of the Year 2 years ago in a previous iteration of the spirited awards. He said, "We didn't do the work to be noticed, we did the work and it was noticeable." I take that to heart anytime I'm thinking about getting into the world where there are all of these bar celebrities and people that are very well established and very well known. It's because they did the work that's noticeable.

First and foremost, it's important to be the sort of bartender and hospitality professional that you yourself are proud of. That you're not doing it for any other reason than the love and joy of what you find in the industry. That's one thing I've been talking about a bit in the last little while, the ability to find joy in our industry, it's incredibly noticeable when someone can do that. That's one aspect of it, make sure you're your own best version of yourself; which is a lot of work to begin with. But in the long term, being honest and authentic and excited about parts of the industry that excite you will not only be noticeable on the global scheme, but bring you so much joy.

Operating on a global platform has definitely impacted my mindset both professionally and personally. Professionally you see best practices, there are blindspots in all of us that you need to shine a light on. So seeing best practices in bars that are working to build safer spaces and doing honest to goodness accountable hands in the dirt diversity and inclusion, it changed how I looked at bars forever after that. If I'm looking at the best bars in Canada and the world and I'm looking at my list for that, being a good cocktail bar isn't enough anymore and probably was never enough. We can go to a lot of bars and have a drink and that's well and good, but the bars that stand out and excite me are the bars that are pushing a lot of different things, but definitely one of them is engagement around queerness and building spaces that are meaningful and bring joy to the community.

Personally speaking too, I'm from Alberta, and I love that aspect of myself, but it's taken a while. When I moved, I wasn't super happy with my own experiences. Seeing what's happening in the news and loving my friends there and seeing the trajectory of what's happening is really fucking rough. To see other parts of the world and how they approach and accept or not queerness has really been eye-opening in a lot of positive ways. The global bartending scene is a scene of radicals, at least the scenes that I care about, a scene of radicals who would not give a fuck about you if you harbour beliefs or are harmful. On a personal level, it has really been enlightening and been a good polishing stone to find a more authentic version of myself as I find people like that.

The reality is, we've lost so much Queer mentorship in decades before us and I think it means we are now seeing the fruits of people who picked up the tools and did the work for generations after them. We lost generations of Queer folks and mentors and writers, I can't even imagine the things that we've lost. To be able to be in any position even as simple as offering comfort and space, that work is so important. It can feel so simple on one side, but be so meaningful on the other. My philosophical bent around comfort and vulnerability at the end of the day deals with the things that were stripped away from all of us.

Being that I'm 37 now, and having lived in Calgary, I really struggled with what it is to be a bisexual man in an era that it was joked about on *Friends* and in most spaces. Having to do a lot of the work and reading to begin to understand that myself, I want everyone to have that opportunity and it to be encouraged. There is no space for the butt-ends of jokes and criticism of being vulnerable and growing. For me, it's all selfish, it's wanting to see people grow and be authentic, it teaches me something about them. Watching someone be an authentic and earnest version of themselves, makes you reflect on the authentic and earnest version of yourself.

I stress it every time we go across Canada and talk about World Class, it's not about finding the archetypal formed bartender that everyone is looking for, it's being you, and showcasing who you are. Competitions are different things, you're looking for cleanliness, accuracy, and hospitality but it's focused on a laser point to present to a series of people. I think the skill set obviously showcases who you are as a bartender in a different way.

The question that I've always given to the competitors who I've mentored when it starts out, say you've gotten to the national or the global stage, it's a microphone handed to you, and you have 15 minutes to say something. Talk about yourself, who you are, your ideas about cocktails, and your love for spirits and the industry, whatever that looks like for you. You have 15 minutes with a microphone in your hand, what do you want to say with it?

I've seen the progression, like with James Grant, one of my nearest and dearest, watching him progress from when we competed together and the positives and negatives throughout that trajectory for him. Then my winning the year before and watching him learn and grow and then win in Canada and then win the globals with a little bit of mentorship was a really good reminder of that. You're not doing the work to make yourself into someone that World Class wants you to be. You're doing the work to showcase the best iteration of who you are. Any form of mentorship that I can give in both fields is being that authentic version of yourself that can clearly and concisely present on the global stage and be earnest and authentic at your bar for guests.



Meaghan Murray

Coming Out as a Queer Bar

Meaghan Murray (They/Them) is one of the owners of the recently opened Toronto bar *Three Dollar Bill*

We took over the physical space for *Three Dollar Bill* on July 1st, 2023 amidst so much excitement. We basically did a full renovation, we took down walls, we took lighting down, and did basically a three-quarters build out entirely ourselves. Castle, my life and business partner, is a carpenter and cabinet maker, and is kind of where this whole idea came from. A few dates in they were like “wouldn't it be cool if we opened a bar together because I know how to build it and you can run it.” and I was like “alright settle down.” Fast Forward 2 years we own a bar together with our business partner Maro.

The initial biggest challenge was the actual physical space, It's an old building in Parkdale in Toronto and the electrical and plumbing was a mess. Once we got into the walls, there were random live junction boxes which didn't go anywhere, we called in professionals for that. We worked with exclusively Queer contractors, except Castle's dad who is a lawyer and helped us with the legal stuff, and is also quite handy. One of the biggest challenges was finding out that the equipment we were assured was in working order, was not in working order. There were a number of unexpected costs and issues which we came upon. We now know better, for hopefully another space down the road, what questions to ask and what to accept at face value or what not to; we overcame it, which was great. We did a 3-month buildout and opened in mid-October, 2024. Building the space and seeing our vision, hard work, and physical and emotional labour come to life was really incredible and such a win for us. Our opening weekend, and since, has had such a wonderful reception from the community, both the Queer community and in Parkdale. Other than the regular challenges in day-to-day business, it's been going incredibly well.

I am an elder Queer, I grew up going to Toronto's Gay Village. I worked there when I was young, and grew up going there, It was really the only space.

Then we started to see a shift to spaces in the west-end. The Henhouse, The Beaver, The Steady, and The Gladstone had a bunch of Queer programming in the mid-00s where we started to experience the “Queer-West” phenomenon. There was an article in *Now Magazine*, with Sandy De Almeida on the cover, the unofficial mayor of Queer west, that talked about the phenomenon of queer culture and spaces moving out of the Village.

The Village has been predominantly gay men, and programming and bars for Cis gay men; historically, there wasn't a lot of space for the other. I believe Queerness is a spectrum, my Queerness has evolved from being a lesbian in my teen years, to now being a Nonbinary Queer person attracted to a spectrum of Queerness. I really started to see that phenomenon evolve in the mid-00s so that there were spaces for other than Cis gay men. When we were looking at spaces for *Three Dollar Bill* we already had friends and spaces in Parkdale and the West End, while not entirely owned by Queer folks, had become Queer spaces by virtue of the people who work there, and the needs of the people who go there.

Castle is a long-term resident of Parkdale, it's more affordable than other parts of Toronto. We are sat between *Tammy's* which is a Queer-friendly space and has a lot of Queer programming and *Peaches* which is a Queer-friendly space, Ronnie & Fush, the owners of *Peaches*, mandate was to create a space where non-cis het men can feel comfortable watching sports. Jamal, the owner of *Tammy's*, has done a fantastic job as well, where the answer to any Queer programming is “Yes!” The location has been a great space to start to build that community. I'm a firm believer that together we are stronger and community is very important. We could have found a standalone space on Bloor Street or something but we would have lacked that strength of community. Maybe folks watch the game at *Peaches* and have a drink with us and then go to *Tammies*, and move across the spaces.

While Parkdale has experienced gentrification in the last 15 years, it's still relatively affordable. It's an at-risk neighborhood which we are aware of. We have no desire to take part in corporate gentrification but we are aware that opening businesses is a part of that and we are privileged to do so. Giving back and serving the community is very

important to us, this also gave us an opportunity to really give back and make a difference that way. We're kiddy-corner to PARC, the Parkdale Activity Recreation Center, they work a lot with many lower-income, marginalized, and street-involved folks and we reached out immediately to learn about de-escalation programming that our team could take part in. We are fortunate that Castle has lived in Parkdale for 11 years, they're a dive-bar guy who loves to go play pool and knows a lot of the folks on a first-name basis because they are in community with them.

We also do a lot of other things which we don't usually draw attention to. We have a gumball machine and we got plastic balls and put tarot fortunes in there, all the money from that goes to the Parkdale Foodbank. It's usually like \$120-150 a month which isn't a huge amount but it's something. Whenever we have a sponsored event, we try to have a charitable aspect and to give above and beyond so that a portion of sales go back to the community. We held a coat and boot and glove/hat drive for *Sistering* which isn't directly in our community but I've worked with them often. *Sistering* specifically has a lot of support for Trans folks in the west-end which is important to us and our mandate of community support. Sandy De Almeida's cocktail, *The Departed*, is also on our menu in her honour and a dollar from every *Departed* goes to CAMH and mental health support specifically to Rainbow Services 2SLGBTQ+ programming.

We really controlled the messaging as much as possible that it was a Queer bar and through that, we wanted to ensure that we backed that up by offering programming across the spectrum. Ensuring that while there are some lesbian dance nights where folks who are more sapphic leaning would come, we would have events where all factions of the Queer community are represented. We are lucky that we are in that honeymoon phase where everyone is reaching out to host events. We've run into a couple of situations where some influencer-type folks are like "My audience are lesbians or sapphic focused so I'll keep my messaging on that to build your business" and I stand outside and say "thank you but you won't, and if you continue to do so, you won't be welcome to host events in this space." That's not the message we want to bring across. It's been carving our identity out and staying true to it and not letting other influences break it. Even if it meant nobody would come, and we lost 50% of our business, we wouldn't change it. If someone walked in and said, "if you didn't call yourself a *lesbian bar* you'd lose X amount of money each year," we'd go okay and figure out how to keep going.

The quintessential and often overlooked aspect of gay bars is how the gay bars in San Francisco in the 1970s really influenced how a cocktail bar is supposed to look. It influenced cocktail culture in the most inclusive way possible. It's important to recognize that and the influences that we've had from other cultural groups and communities, and for me, I take some liberties. There's certainly nothing about Ada Coleman being a lesbian, but she lived with her "best friend" for 35 years, never married. Even by virtue of her influence as a woman and as a head bartender and paving the way for people other than cis men, being a part of the "other" is important to recognize. Having

safe-spaces in general is really important and influential to even our current cocktail culture.

The 2014-2017 cocktail scene was so pretentious, it wasn't accessible to everyone, it was intimidating. You should be so lucky to sit down and have a drink by a twisty mustache, tattooed, leather-apron man and pay \$20. The pushback against that has really gone back to inclusivity, if it's not accessible or inclusive it's not sustainable. That's what we saw in a lot of gay bars and the sip-ins of New York in the 1960s Queer folks went into spaces they weren't welcome and sat and waited until they got service. Because they weren't doing anything wrong and they couldn't get booted out, spaces were forced to welcome them. They fought against human rights violations, that is important for us to know about, it paved the way for now.

I think too that there's an idea that gay bars of the past, and of now, are dens of hedonism and people are doing drugs and sipping tequila sodas and vodka sodas; but these are cocktail bars. People were going on dates and having nice conversations or business meetings, even today. If you go to the *Black Eagle* on a random Tuesday afternoon and sit on the patio, it's a nice spot to have some food and a drink. Is it a sex party on a Friday night? Yeah, but that's the beauty of it. That's the diversity of it that makes it so beautiful. We do get to do it. That's what's beautiful about being Queer and being in a Queer community we get to be so many different things and explore our identities, both individually and in the community.

Creating a space where experimentation is allowed and people can be any version of who they are and explore is so important. We have always been very clear in our messaging that while our space welcomes everyone from every walk of life that this is a Queer space. This is not a space for Queer tourism or voyeurism. If you are a straight person, we ask that you are aware of the space you're taking up, there are so many other places you can be. We welcome respectful engagement and inquiry but, we also aren't here to educate, that's your responsibility. No matter what type of space you go into, you're expected to be respectful, straight or Queer.

We have asked people to leave, we've had cis-straight men come in and be disrespectful, especially on drag nights. We catch it immediately and ask them to leave. We will give them their cover charge back, take their drink and ask them to leave. We have a door person and have them monitor people. It goes for people in our community who are unsafe as well. Safety is what it comes down to, emotional, physical, and relational safety. We have folks who come in who aren't out, and this is a safe-space for them. I've been in spaces and I run into people and it's like "ooh okay nice to see you here," but there is also an element of danger. If you present straight, and you're not out, you have to do what you have to do to be safe. If *Three Dollar Bill* is the one place you can be authentically true, it's our responsibility to keep that safe.

**Find *Three Dollar Bill* 7-
Days a week at 1592
Queen St. West, Toronto.**

MAKE MORE BAD ART

JUNO AND CHINESE MEDICINE

Juno is the frontwoman for Toronto based punk band, *Chinese Medicine*, and a tireless advocate for building more inclusive spaces in the Arts.

Chinese Medicine officially became a band in 2022. Originally, the idea wasn't supposed to be a band or anything, it was during the pandemic. I was involved in music my whole life, and went to college for theatre and musical theater. While I was there, I kinda stopped playing music and focused on acting. At the time, I was very closeted, I was focused on playing the perfect leading man.

When I graduated, I moved to Toronto and was working there for about 5 or 6 years. I was focused on work and wasn't really doing music or consuming the art or media that I like because, "this is what a man does," and then the pandemic started and everything was crazy. A lot of people came to terms with Queerness during that time because you had to just sit and think and feel it. I came to a point where everything in my life was turned upside down, I didn't even know what gender I was anymore. It was during that time I realized my first love was music. Music kinda became a way for me to deal with a lot of feelings and find something I love to do again that was genuine.

I think of this quote from Laura Jane Grace when she was writing *Transgender Dysphoria Blues*; "I wasn't writing it for anyone else, I was writing it to save my life." I took that and said "I'm gonna do that. I'm going to write just for me to say everything I need to say and express everything I need to express." I wanted to just do something that I'm proud of, make a shitty recording in my apartment and maybe release nothing to the public but I'll have it out there.

That's how I wrote our first EP, *Die Aspora*, and then it kinda just started to spiral. I realized I could be successful

without pretending to be someone I'm not, I can just be myself and there is a place for it.

I hope whoever sees this feels encouraged to make art for themselves because someone will resonate with it, even if it's objectively terrible. There are terrible musicians who are very famous and successful, as long as it's genuine. That's what I've learned about what people care about. I am such a proponent of people just making shit, even people who don't consider themselves creative, you definitely are to some extent, you don't need to monetize it.

I've been playing music for 20 years and I've studied music, our band is all professionals who have been playing for ages and we've come together to build a tight and professional sound. We'll play shows with bands who have only been together for like a year or so and hadn't played their instruments too long, and like, it wasn't in tune or always in time, but I fucking loved it. Because it means they didn't give a fuck. I get so stressed out about not being a good guitar player so I didn't do anything for years, and they're like "oh yeah I'm sure we can do this," and like yeah sure maybe their banter or musicality is not clean but it's so raw and authentic and that's the best. I want more of that. The more people wait to make a perfect product and polish it, the more you make it palatable. And then you lose and cover up the true message of what it's inspired by. I want people who give their best and don't give a fuck and have fun with it.

When it comes to lyrics, I find it interesting when someone says they like what I'm doing because it's like, "this thing is so personal why would you like it," but I know that's how art

works. As I grow older, there will be different feelings and new themes, but I've spent so long being someone I'm not that now when I'm being painfully honest and showcasing who I am, it's been freeing.

I can be at home with my partner and feel certain of myself as a Transwoman and know I am valid in my existence, and then I have to go to my day job where a lot of people see me differently and balance that feeling. When I'm performing on stage, I always dress very fem and have a lot of makeup on because I love doing that and it's fun to see that on stage. I'm proud of being a Trans person, and in those moments at our shows, we really try to put on good show that creates inclusive spaces. We end up playing with mostly Queer bands, be as free and Queer as you can. Those moments are what I hold onto in my day-to-day life, to combat feelings like I'm a boy to everyone else.

When I first started playing music, I knew punk had a reputation for being old, white, and crusty. When I got into it, especially with local bands, it was the opposite. The first show we did was all cis, straight bands and I was a little nervous. Were they ready for the *Chinese Medicine* flamboyant extravaganza that we were gonna do? There was one band specifically that was older and all white that I was very nervous about, they were quiet backstage too. After our set, the lead came up and said "You're amazing and that was awesome. Fuck anyone who says you can't be who you are and that being Trans is wrong. The most punk rock thing you can do is be radically yourself and accepting yourself and loving yourself. It honestly makes you more bad-ass than me. I'm just a white dude. You're out here doing all that despite everything." It was a moment that was so sweet and so loving.

We have a lot of people after shows who are Trans or BIPOC and come up and say "we don't go to a lot of shows but we feel safe at your shows" and they bring their friends out. The community has been really nice, when doing shows with *Chinese Medicine* we are very mindful of the other bands we book and make sure they're supporting our community and are rad. Recently Lauren Price of the band *Monstrosa* and I decided we wanted to take it a step further. Years ago I started a Queer and BIPOC collective aimed at diversity in theatre called the *Basket Collective*, now we're switching that up and making a company that's specifically about putting on safe, inclusive punk shows, booking bands, and providing instruments or coaching.

Our first inaugural show is in June and it's going to be called "Fagfest: an Alternative Pride Festival." It's something I've wanted to do for a while, I love pride, and I love pop. I can listen to *Rain On Me* 100 times but this is a pride event for alternative, punk, Queer folks; Live bands, live drag, punk DJs. We'll keep it going, putting on cool events that are equitable where artists can make money and get promotion and experience.

The fact that art is so defined feels a little crazy to me, it defeats the purpose of art. Fine art vs. folk art is clearly racist. Why is this folk art vs. a Renaissance painting? It was all so arbitrary. When I started *Basket Collective*, it was because I felt like I didn't belong in the theater industry, there was no space for me. I talked to my therapist and spent a lot of time talking about it and decided I could wait for it to get better or I could make a change myself.

Inherently, because I want to make spaces more inclusive and open, it had to be multidisciplinary. When I think about empowering folks, if I'm empowering Indigenous artists but I'm only taking artists that are only in this Western art-form, we miss out on a whole world of art and storytelling and tradition. It's not very empowering to make everyone conform to this box.

Chinese Medicine's
first EP
Die Aspora can be
found wherever you
stream music





Nick Benyamen

Decolonial Hospitality

Nick (He/They) Is a Queer and Iraqi bartender and performer based in Toronto, Ontario and advocate for decolonization

Most people don't think about how our industry is linked to colonialism and how food is in itself is colonized, especially in the act of consumption. In the context of North American food cultures, you're looking at how we're taking many forms of influences from many cultures and intertwining those. The fabric of how other restaurants and places of hospitality involve other cultures in their practices and how they present.

Where I work, 416 Snackbar, is a long-standing industry hub and has always touted itself as very Torontonion and showcases the ethnic multicultural place of Toronto. Much of the food is inspired by the East Asian heritage, and the Middle Eastern regions of Toronto too. What does not get included in those conversations, is the fact that there is a more public policy that is behind food. Why are we allowed to access these cultures and the rights to showcase another person's culture in our food or establishment but not tell their stories?

We recently changed head chefs at Snackbar. The chef, Tim Avon, is of Filipino descent, he brought a lot of food he culturally grew up with. It was easy to talk about his food and the food he was surrounded by and made. We got to learn those stories and properly tell them. He was talking about the food he grew up with and shared the stories with us so that we could share them with people. Often when it comes to food we perpetuate the existing systems because we try to sell and commodify culture. In a direct sense, we profit off of other people's cultures.

It was absurd to see in December what went down with Uber Eats. There was this really disgusting treatment and there were so many Middle Eastern foods labelled as Israeli ,or just Middle Eastern in a broad spectrum. There were multiple tags associated with restaurants and there were a lot of restaurants that were just

purely Iraqi, Jordanian, Palestinian, or Lebanese, that weren't just given the tag of Middle Eastern, but also Israeli, which did not make sense. The up-in-arms that people went in, I'm so proud of people for having this wherewithal and how quickly we were to react about it, especially in regards to *Lavant Pizza*.

Lavant Pizza is a Palestinian-Italian fusion. Palestinian-owned and operated and they have an entire print on their front window talking about how they are a Palestinian-owned and operated restaurant that wanted to have fun flipping Italian food on its head and trying to embed their culture into the local fabric here. I'm so happy that there was outrage here, you got to learn more about places like *Dosa* or *Haifa Room*. Ironically, the chefs are both Palestinian and Israeli and they grew up here and knew they would have this conversation. They can use it to their advantage and say "Hey we are Palestinian, Palestinians are being killed, there is a genocide, and we can talk about this in the context of food as a lot of Israeli food is re-appropriated Palestinian and Arab foods."

In terms of the Palestinian food in Toronto, there has been more information about what traditional Palestinian foods are and what their biggest exports are and what has been taken away from them. Since then, people have been able to learn about the symbology of the watermelon as a visual form of resistance, how they had massive watermelon fields that were taken away from them or olive trees and how they produced a lot of olive oil and that was restricted and burned down, or how strawberries were revered and labelled as "red gold" amongst the Palestinian people, and their season was a time of year that they all looked forward to.

In the context of the Western World and Toronto, more people want to learn about and support Palestinian-owned places, the food they produce, and what producers of Palestinian foods can do to inform us. With Lavant Pizza, people are getting to consume their food and have an active conversation about Palestinian food and food cultures. It's been nice to see even the TikTok food bloggers actively using their digital marketing and platforms to showcase great Palestinian businesses and restaurants to support.

One thing that came out of that debacle is that larger tech companies now understand that people are looking at them and how they are being managed. Lavant Pizza first caught that issue at the very beginning of December. People started finding out about a week or two later and it took about 2 weeks after that for it to resolve and a proper Palestinian food category to be added. When I was looking for Palestinian food in December, I only got two results, Haifa Room and one other. When you looked at Middle Eastern it would give you a very broad spectrum. A lot of Shawarma King and fast food.

There's such a degree of respect in Arab food and culture that's overlooked because often we get 'othered' and clumped because we're not looked at as people with individual culture and history, but rather, recognized by a troubled and messy history that was made messier by Western intrusion and destruction. So much of our culture and history is wiped away or not documented or given contextualization and contemplation pre-9/11 or Gulf Wars. I'm happy that now there is a larger callout for identifying beyond just Middle Eastern and being categorized as Palestinian or Arab or Iranian, the fabric of the Middle East and our food cultures are so different and varied and specific.

When you consume food, you need to look at where you're buying it from. Look at where your food is grown. Look at a package and the label and see it's a product of Mexico or Taiwan or Malaysia or what they will now say is, "Palestinian territories" rather than Palestine. I am very carefully looking at who packages figs, dates, and pomegranates because you never know which are subsidiaries of Israeli companies. There's a lot of importance on where we're actually getting our food from because you don't know who you're supporting or where your money is going when you're getting groceries. Shopping for groceries is part of the minutiae of the day-to-day, you can no longer just stroll through the produce lane and just grab something, there is so much more behind that.

The imagery of food has to do with things we relate to on a day-to-day basis. How often visual imagery plays one of the most important roles in any form of resistance or protest or education. Specifically, the watermelon as an emoji, how it can bypass algorithmic traps for content and how people can use it as an image or say "the watermelon people" as a coded sign of a national identity behind Palestinians, it's very clever. However, this does bring up the conversation about why we need to use coded language to bypass censorship. Why do we have to be censored around our speech of Palestinian people and addressing the genocide of Gaza. It's not just food and identity but visual identity and how you talk about people. It's incredibly important and that it itself has been able to let people know food has a history and is intrinsically tied to who we are as people and how we consume and prepare: but it's also a way of talking about people. We are what we eat, truly. We are looking at things of recognition behind identity.

If you're making a watermelon-based cocktail now, you have a segue to talk about Palestinian efforts. Talking about watermelon and watermelon as a flavour, you're no longer just ordering a drink, it's political and being produced by people active in the ongoing resistance against colonization, you can paint a story and picture for people. When it comes to food identity and resistance, you can control that narrative and story and talk about the ingredients you're using.

I don't get to walk away from this conversation because I am living this conversation. I don't get to walk away from the fact that I'm an Arab person and I am a Queer gender non-conforming body with history and that is its own conflict... and then you bring that into a Western culture. I don't walk away from those conversations, I can't step out of my body. My body is political and every space I am in is automatically political. Everything I serve to you and make you is political by the fact that I made it, and it's informed by me.

There should be a more active and conscious effort to look at the history of ingredients and interweave it into your conversations of identity. We are no longer just consumers. There is no way to go back to a simpler time and I get that is why people go out to, bars but at this point, there is no such thing anymore.

Learn more about ongoing
boycotts at
EthicalConsumer.org.

Finding Your People

Jade Janzen

Jade Janzen is a trans bartender located in Winnipeg and was one of the bartenders who took part in the Negroni Week Exchange in September 2023

I had really started looking more into the things that Bartender Atlas had been doing and that's where I saw the Campari Exchange. I hadn't gotten the chance to travel much for work, I had once before and it went really terribly, maybe this was a fresh slate. I'm a different person now than I was then, so I applied. I got selected and got to travel to Homer Street Cafe in downtown Vancouver and everyone there was really really lovely and welcoming. It was easy in terms of being able to be myself in that space.

Our one requirement was wearing Campari aprons. On my work apron, I always wear a pronoun pin and some other fun pins and I put them on and if I'm the only one who has these, whatever. It was perceived really well, everyone looked and got it. There were no questions asked, this is you, you're part of the club. It was really easy to find a sense of belonging and become integrated.

I had left my previous job before my current one because I couldn't be myself. I couldn't have a pin, there was no space for that. My current bar has been so lovely and accommodating with identity and transition. I was nervous about going to a new city I hadn't been to in forever and a new place with a bunch of new people and it's a Michelin-recommended place. I was expecting a white tablecloth and pretension and it was none of that.

I'm, to my knowledge, one of two Trans bartenders throughout Winnipeg; just two, two that are visible and out. We don't know who is in the closet and haven't found the right time to come out. We have our safe havens but the big thing for me, not just with the Campari Week Exchange, but with my bartending overall, is that my Transness makes me want to work harder, because there isn't that representation. I cherish my role in representation a lot, as cheesy as it may sound, I wanted it to be like, "If one tranny can do it, any tranny can do it." We can travel, have fun, drink magnums of rosé in rooms full of paintings of cocks.

It was about being out there and being present, that's the most important part for me. I will advocate and fight and celebrate and mourn, but at the end of the day, as long as we exist and we are going through our day-to-day, that is a victory. Every day I can be visibly myself and visibly be a person in the world, to have that shown, I really hope more people see that and know that this is an industry you can be all that you want to be. We are so far away from the old boys' clubs and shitty misogyny, we're moving past that. It's time to be done with that, we're here.

When it comes to building community, it's about raw authentic presentation and the way that I can inject my Transness into my work and my recipes and the way that I engage with people. The way that I host, it's about bringing who you are to the table and constantly pushing to build that community. I'm going to show you who I am and I want you to reciprocate.

At the end of the day, building community reminds me of this thing a mentor of mine in theater said about creating Queer work and spaces. A big thing was changing the narrative of coming out, instead of pushing ourselves upon people, which in some cases you need to do, but building Queer community is instead inviting people in. It's welcoming people in. Instead of coming out, it's like, "alright welcome into this circle welcome into this space."

I'm really lucky I'm in a small place and not in corporate. You can say no. You can negate what does not need to be here, what's attacking, there's this fight. This Queer resistance and resilience which has existed for years and years. A big part of building these spaces is saying: get the fuck out. If you're bringing homophobia, transphobia, racism, Islamophobia, any of those, get the fuck out there's no space for that.

I'm very fortunate that I haven't experienced a lot of face-to-face in-person transphobia. There's a part of me that understands as a 6-foot-5 person with a deeper voice, I have a bit more to prove day-to-day with my presentation. I'm lucky at work that at our front door, there's a whole message about this space, about not bringing this or this in this space.

I was in a chain restaurant before, in an industrial park, constantly getting blue-collar workers or well-meaning suburban types. Even though they meant well, it was always dealing with the "Why are people even trans?", "Why does this even happen, I just don't understand". I didn't deal with it as much back then when I was in the closet and now I have a fire under my ass to deal with it and protect and fight and be vocal. It's a big mission for me to quash anything. Because it's 2024. We've always been here. How has it taken this long?

Just this other day everyone has been talking about Nex Benedict who just died in Oklahoma. The school system won't do anything, and seeing that shit and seeing the higher powers consistently let it go, makes me want to fight.

My bar Bonnie Day is my favorite. I love it, we're a neighbourhood bar, a lot of our clients and work is based in the neighbourhood. The community has always been there, the lovely part is that historically it's part of the "granola belt" where the hippies are. There are tons of younger people, it's right outside of downtown where the University of Winnipeg campus is, which is a great influx. There is a great progressive community regardless of age. It takes a bit, but you do see that shift of more Queers coming down. My coworker and I met this bartender from another bar, we don't specifically know their identity but they were a wonderfully visibly Queer person. We had a fully Queer staff working that day and to have that presence in the bar that day was amazing. This was what queer hospitality is and can be. For forever it used to just be nightclubs but it's so much more.

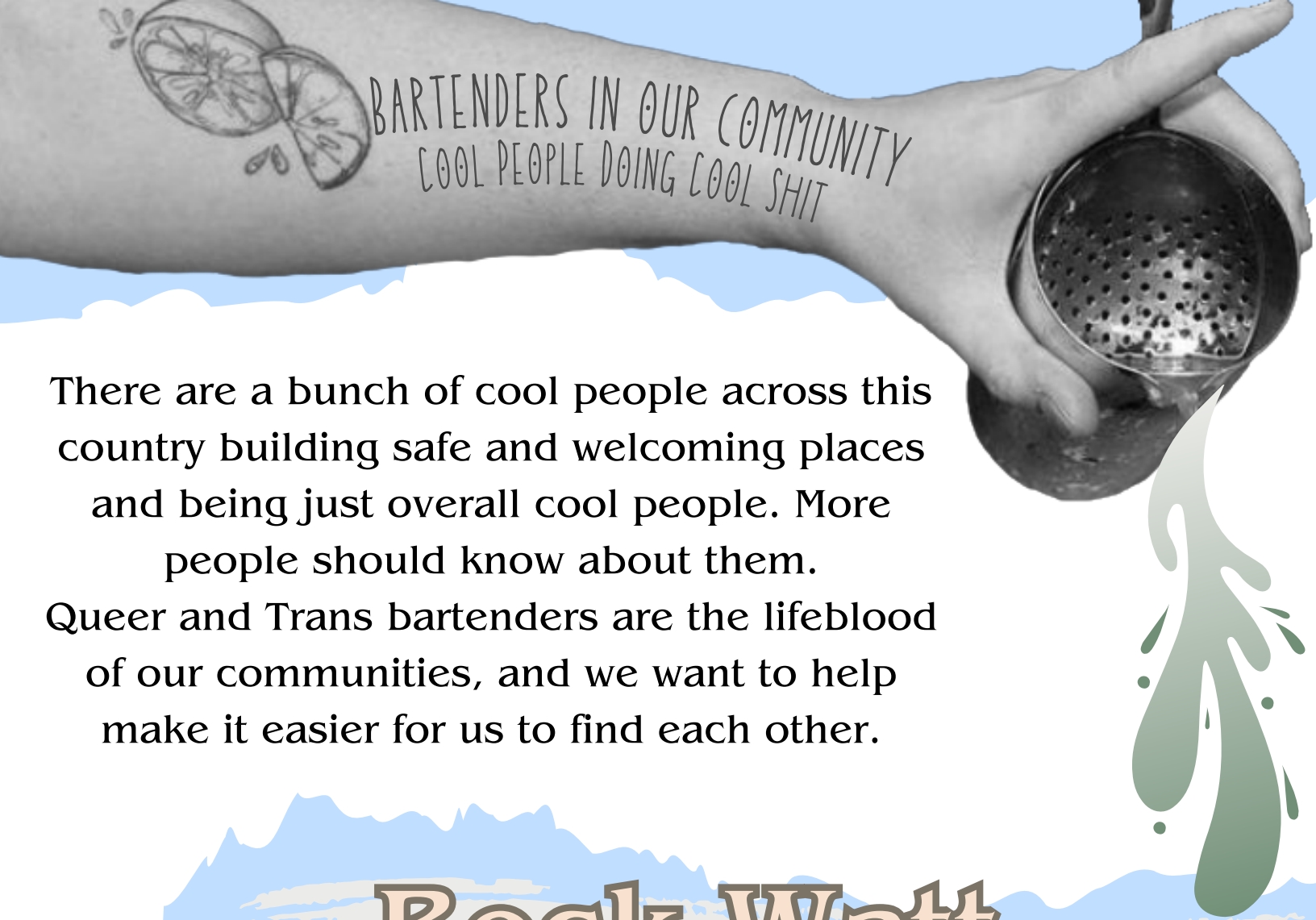
We were relegated to nightclubs cause we weren't allowed to be seen. So the power to run a service and have that happen is so impactful. I weep every time a Transwoman comes in. I'm so happy that you feel safe coming here. They're all so beautiful, and here we are from behind the bar, sweaty and covered in juices, and the dolls are coming in all dolled up, it's unfair hahaha.

Just to be able to witness Queer hospitality and day-to-day Queer life is so meaningful and it's something that every space needs. A lot of the way people view transgender people as like a ticking time bomb of death and waiting for transphobia to happen, but there's so much life and joy that people don't see. If we have to shove that joy down their throat, let's do it. That's why I make cocktails to shove my joy down your throats.

If I can say anything to people who are scared to be in these places regardless of if you're working or as a guest, you belong everywhere. There are so many places you belong. They're out there, we're out there. We are your big sisters, we'll take you in. There's too much gatekeeping both inside and out of the Queer community. You belong here. Where you are is where you need to be.

Interested in finding out about events like the Campari exchange? Make sure you're a part of Bartender Atlas!





There are a bunch of cool people across this country building safe and welcoming places and being just overall cool people. More people should know about them.

Queer and Trans bartenders are the lifeblood of our communities, and we want to help make it easier for us to find each other.



Beck Watt ^{They/He} Amsterdam Tea Room, Winnipeg @BeckTheBartender



**FAVOURITE COCKTAIL
SIDECAR**

I like how Queerness plays into the fun you can have with cocktail creation. The ability to think and imagine beyond what is "typically done" allows for interesting creations which encourage both the bartender and guest to think, taste, and experience something beyond their comfort zone.

Being visibly Queer and using 'they' pronouns immediately starts a conversation wherever I work about creating spaces that are welcoming to all people. I am regularly a part of conversations with my coworkers regarding breaking down our gendered language and assumptions about people based on our immediate first impressions. There is an ease that you can almost feel settle over Queer guests when they interact with a Queer bartender or server and when they are greeted in a gender-inclusive way and I love being able to provide that experience! Creating relationships is an integral part of the service industry and that often starts with a guests first interaction with their host, server, or bartender and for me, the language that we use in those first moments is crucial to setting the tone for that guests experience.

Liam Mauro

Miku, Toronto They/He
@Lalalaliam

Queerness influences pretty much everything I do, as I feel like it makes me see the world through a very specific lens.

Over the years in this industry, I've gone from a teenage girl, to a woman, to a masc presenting nonbinary person, and it hasn't been easy. I've always been unapologetic about my Queerness, and because I didn't have anybody Queer working above me when I first started working in hospitality, I try to be that Queer mentor to others that I was lacking for myself.

In the past, I had constantly felt like my Queerness and being unforgivingly myself was a burden on the higher ups. Miku has been nothing but professional and supportive since day one. The management team always has my back, and really appreciate me exactly the way I am. I'm allowed to wear whatever I want (within the guidelines of the men's AND women's uniforms), and I know I am safe while doing so. I felt like I could finally relax at work for the first time in years.

Sarah Dharshi

Fu's Repair Shop and Double Dragon, Edmonton She/Her
@Sawrasaurusrex

In a cishet male dominated industry, Queerness influences my work in everything I do. While working at the bar, I live loud and proud by consistently affirming mine and my coworkers' Queerness to redefine what being Queer in the workplace means and looks like.

As a cis, Queer, neurodivergent, South Asian woman, I have many privileges in Queer spaces, but I also face bi/panphobia and erasure, and racism. I am hyper aware of this in the workplace and am constantly striving to excel to empower and inspire other folks from equity-seeking communities who don't always feel represented or seen.

In terms of the creative side of cocktail bartending, my Queerness is the driving factor behind creating cocktails that spark joy, start conversations, stir up memories, and help the consumers expand their horizons in terms of culture and flavour.

I am a strong advocate for creating spaces free of all bigotry, and this means implementing inclusive policy where everyone feels supported and respected. I am lucky to work in an incredibly welcoming space at Fu's, and I try to contribute to this positive culture by advocating for increased educational opportunities for staff and management to support our goals of being a true safe space.

We are so much more than just bartenders - we have the opportunities and the platforms to be ambassadors for change, for revolution. This is how we change Edmonton's hospitality and nightlife culture for the better - by setting expectations, by identifying problems, by driving change, by speaking up, by getting involved, and by taking care of one another. We owe it to ourselves and to our community.



FAVOURITE COCKTAIL
WRITTEN WORD



FAVOURITE COCKTAIL
SPICY MARGARITA



THINGS YOU SHOULD BE DRINKING

Lavender Haze

Laur Flom They/Them
@sensitivequeer Toronto

1oz Dry Gin
1oz Lemon Juice
1oz blue lavender Syrup
0.5oz Amaro Nonino
0.25 Green Chartreuse
Shake, and strain into a chilled Coupe.
Garnish with dried lavender.

Blue Lavender Syrup

Steep 1 tsp dried lavender in 1/2 cup boiling water for 5 minutes. Strain, and mix in 1/2 cup sugar and 1/4th tsp butterfly pea flower powder

*As soon as Taylor Swift released *Midnights*, I knew I wanted to make a cocktail based on the opening track, *Lavender Haze*. While Swift has not confirmed any Queer interpretations of the song, I will always choose to hear it as a song about Queerness.*

Lavender has a long history as a Queer symbol, which is why I chose it as a main aspect of this drink. That along with the botanicals in the gin bring a certain fruitiness that I find is often lacking in non-Queer bars.




Miami Vice Revisited

Chris Pickering
@Drinkahead

He/Him

Nabi, Edmonton



*1.5oz Blanco Tequila
1oz Strawberry Nigori Sake
0.75oz Coco Lopez
1oz Fresh Pineapple Juice
0.5oz Fresh Lime Juice
Shake, double strain into a rocks glass over a king cube
garnish with freeze dried Strawberry powder*

Coco Lopez

Mix equal parts white sugar and coconut milk, as well as a touch of vanilla bean past, heat to dissolve.

I wanted to reinvent a fairly stigmatized classic cocktail, the Miami Vice, and present it in a way that wouldn't seem out of place at a whiskey bar. The flavor profile is still intact, but it drinks and presents in a very dignified and balanced way.


What's interesting about growing up Queer is that you are pressured to be one extreme or the other. Those who do not approve of your Queerness want you to tone it down and 'just act normal'. When they say normal, they often mean heteronormative. In contrast, many in the Queer scene don't think you're being Queer enough. The Miami Vice is this behemoth of a drink. It's loud. It's fruity. It's larger than life. If we are using that drink as an analogy for my Queer journey, I relate more to my revisited version. I've embraced my Queerness, my loudness, and my fruitiness my way. I've made my own identity.

Neither, Either, In-Between

Beck Watt
@BecktheBartender

Amsterdam Tea Room, Winnipeg

They/He



*1.5oz Canadian Whiskey
0.5oz Cointreau
0.5oz Lemon Juice
0.75oz Spiced Brown Sugar Syrup
4 drops Turkish Tobacco Bitters
Shake and double strain into a salt rimmed rocks glass*

Spiced Brown Sugar

*Syrup
Mix 50G brown sugar, 50g water, 1/4 tsp ground tumeric, 1/4 tsp ground ginger, 1/8th tsp ground cinnamon, 1/8th tsp ground clove, stir over heat to dissolve. Let sit overnight strain through coffee filter.*

"Neither, Either, In-between" was the result of an experimentation during the daylight savings "spring forward" time change last year. Reflecting on this particularly unique phenomenon where it felt like everyone was feeling some form of shift and discomfort in the "in-between" nature of this transition: the hopeful feelings of the spring to come, mixed with the reality of the still existing winter gloom. This experience was felt one step deeper for myself, while negotiating the ups, downs, and flux of a trans identity. This cocktail seeks to find beauty in the uncomfortable and the neither, either, in-between journey of identity. The warmth of the rye and spiced brown sugar call to cozy comforts, while the chilled boozy hit and salt rim playfully pull you into something risky but playful. A delightful display of how beautiful it can be to be neither, either, and/or in-between.

Bar Dad's Pussy

Dae Conrod *They/Them*
The Second City, Toronto
@Baddaegooddae

2oz Blanco Tequila
0.5oz Lime
0.5oz Lychee Ginger Syrup
0.5oz Lychee Juice
0.5oz Grapefruit Juice
0.25oz Aperol
5 dashes Orange Bitters
1ml Saline Solution
1 Muddled Lychee

Shake and double
strain over ice
into a salt
rimmed Collins
glass

Lychee Ginger Syrup

Blend 1 can lychee with its juice, combine with 3/4 cup sugar and 1 heaping tablespoon peeled and chopped ginger. Simmer for 15-20 mins. let cool. Strain through a sieve

At my first bartending job in Toronto, I weaselled my way onto their cocktail list with a pretty basic variation of a Paloma called the Phreaky Paloma. I ended up leaving the spot a week or so after its conception due to an injury (& a misogynistic manager). Bar Dad's Pussy is a crazier, more nuanced variation of a Paloma that I wouldn't have been able to create without all the experiences I've had since that first go-around.

I feel my Queerness, like every other part of myself, seep into everything I do. The name is a little (on the nose) nod to gender fluidity. My coworkers do call me Bar Dad, which has been a hilariously gender-affirming experience

Gods of Mischief

Calliope Draper *Partake, Edmonton*
@Nonbarnary *She/they*

1.5oz Highlands Single Malt Scotch
1oz Hercules
0.25oz Absinthe
0.25oz Dry Curacao
3 dashes Peychauds bitters
Stir over ice, strain into a chilled Nick and Nora glass
Garnish with a twist of orange

Hercules

Add 10g of Yerba Mate tea to 1 bottle of Punt E Mes. Let sit for 12 hours in the fridge. Strain through a coffee filter.

In both making drinks and in life overall I often find myself looking at mythologies and stories of the past for inspiration. Gods of Mischief is a playful take on the modern classic Rapsallion inspired by the various gods of trickery which appear in mythology. So often these gods of mischief bend and change their gender presentations in stories at a whim, an act which, to me, demonstrates that breaking gender norms isn't just normal, but also divine.

As someone who personally tends towards spirit-forward and bitter cocktails I always want to push past the label of Queer cocktails as inherently sweet. To me, the core part of a Queer cocktail isn't the flavour profile, but its the element of mischief and playfulness. As we all go about our days, breaking down norms and injecting some silliness into the world, we add to the long tradition of the gods of mischief.

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TransRightsYeg

The Skipping Stone Foundation
Our Wonderful Contributors
People such as yourself.

Join The Community

FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM- @PlacesYouAreWelcomeZine
SUBMIT TO OUR NEXT ISSUE PlacesYouAreWelcome.com

PYAW ISSUE #1 March 2024

Places You Are Welcome

*Our work, our art, and our spaces matter.
Now more than ever.*

*Support your local Queer artists,
Celebrate Queer joy,
and radically reshape our world.*

With love, Calliope