

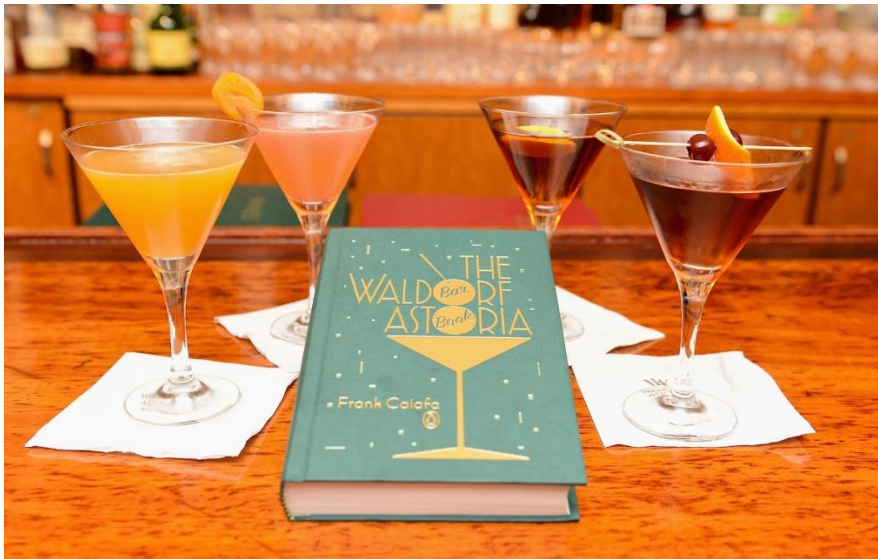
Parade

COMMUNITY  TABLE

Fabulous Cocktail Recipes from the Famous Waldorf Astoria New York

FEBRUARY 8, 2017 – 11:09 AM

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(© Waldorf Astoria New York)

Welcome to “Behind the Bars,” an inviting, travel-inspired interview series in which accomplished mixologists, spirit-makers, vintners, brewmasters, and nightlife experts answer fun, feisty, fantasy questions. Plus, at the end, there are favorite recipes for you to try. My new tasty talk spotlights Frank Caiafa, who has been mixologist and bar manager at New York City’s famous Waldorf Astoria Hotel, where his delectable drinks have long been shaken, stirred, and swooned over at its legendary Peacock Alley and La Chine restaurants. Born and raised in Brooklyn, he is the author of the new *The Waldorf Astoria Bar Book* (brimming with scores of recipes, tips, and colorful historical tidbits) and heads a hospitality consulting and management business, Handle Bars NYC. Warm up reading this cool Q&A with Caiafa; then please click the **LAUNCH GALLERY** button (above or below) — and easily click again through all 4 cocktail photos and recipes. This is what we dished about:



Frank Caiafa. (© Waldorf Astoria New York)

What has been your happiest cocktail experience?

Discovering many unknown, forgotten, or unheralded recipes while writing *The Waldorf Astoria Bar Book*. There were so many that not only delighted me as products of their era, but also once tasted, proved quite timeless as well. Ballantine, Commodore No. 2, and Poet's Dream come to mind.

You're stranded alone on a deserted island for a month. Which three (specific) cocktails would be there (magically!) for you?

Since I think it would be warm, I would lean toward the refreshing classics. The Mai Tai, Margarita, and simple Gin & Tonic would do the trick.

With whom would you most like to share cocktails? (A fantasy question!)

Without a doubt it would be the late Albert Stevens Crockett, the writer of the original Waldorf books: *Old Waldorf Bar Days, 1931* and *The Old Waldorf Astoria Bar Book, 1934*. Discussing how tastes evolved (or haven't) and asking specific questions about the Old Bar and its time would surely make my day. My wife Margaret is my favorite cocktail partner. Time sharing drinks with her is always magical.

What has been the biggest surprise about your career as a bartender/mixologist?

It is amazing to see how it has become a desired profession for so many and not just something that you 'fell into,' a stop-gap job that you held while waiting for your 'real' career to come through.

What is your personal motto?

I have so many when it comes to the service industry, though the tried and true 'There is always something to do' is always in heavy rotation.

Which five words best describe you?

Passionate, confidant, caring, generous, and funny.

What is your favorite cocktail book?

I can create a long list, but *Vintage Spirits and Forgotten Cocktails* by Ted Haigh was probably the first modern introduction to pre-Prohibition imbibing which improved on the original recipes and added historical and interesting content as well. Certainly referred to often during my early days at Peacock Alley.

What is the best thing that you have ever done to make yourself happy?

Constantly taking chances — in both my professional and personal life.

What would guests sitting at your bar be most surprised to learn about you?

I was in a rock band (The Problems) for more than 15 years.

What has been your most important bartending lesson?

Everyone is different. Everyone should be treated the same.

What has given you the most pleasure working at the Waldorf Astoria New York?

Given the opportunity to work at such an iconic location for about a dozen years now is something that I treasure daily. It will be a hard act to follow.

What do you enjoy most about living in New York City?

I was born here, so I enjoy it all — but especially the summertime angst of being a die-hard Mets fan.

The Waldorf Astoria New York — with an illustrious and dazzling [history](#) that has included U.S. presidents, heads of state, celebrities, and luminaries — was purchased for \$1.95 billion by China's Anbang Insurance Company in 2014. The hotel will close for major renovations at the end of February, 2017; its grand makeover is expected to last two to three years. It will remain managed by Hilton upon reopening. For updates on its new debut: [Waldorf Astoria New York](#). Recipes reprinted with permission from The Waldorf Astoria Bar Book.

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