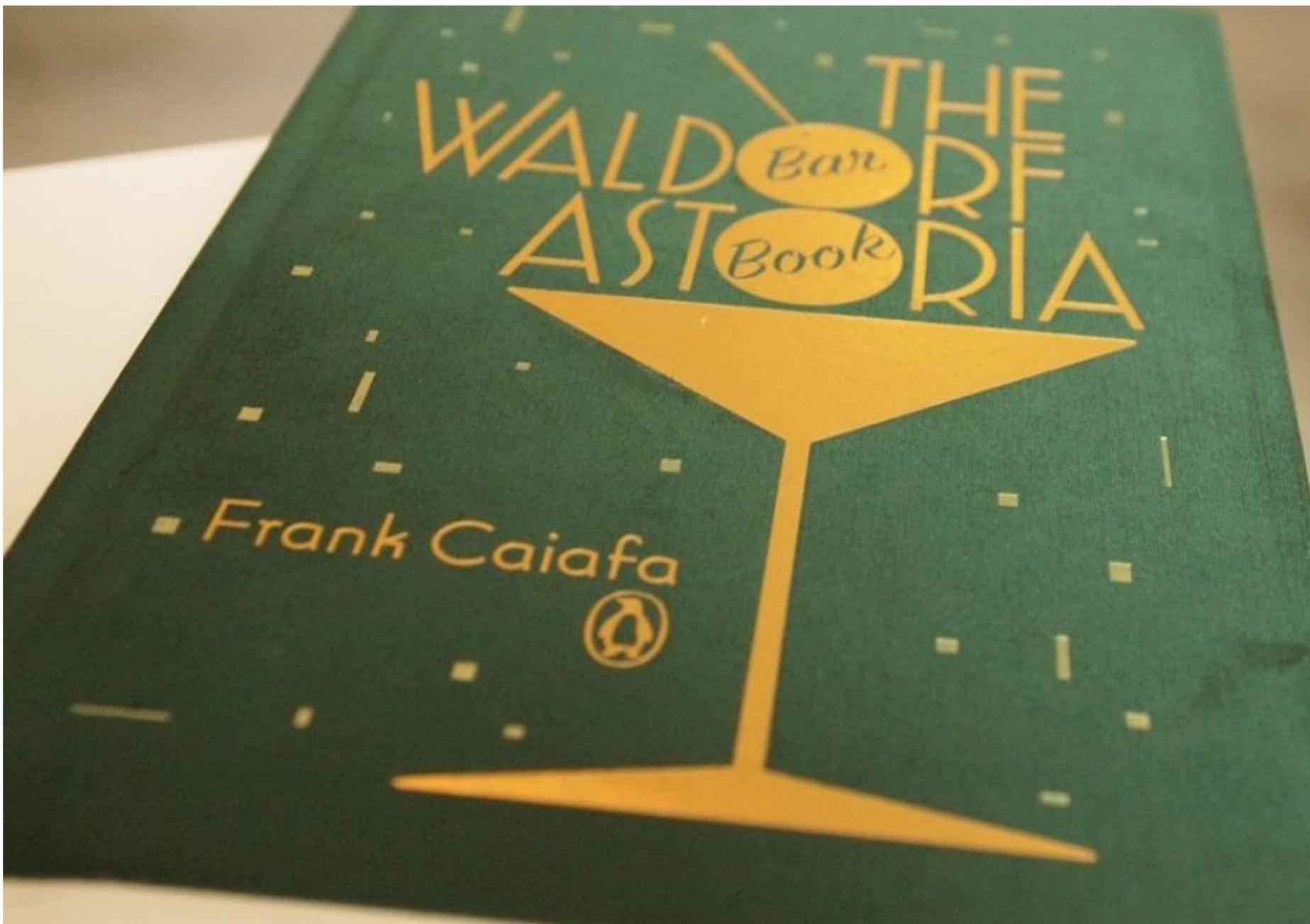


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The Waldorf Astoria Bar Book | The Peacock

by Martin Corriveau (<http://justcocktails.com/author/martincorriveau/>)



(http://justcocktails.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/header_waldorf.jpg) OLYMPUS DIGITAL CAMERA

The Old Waldorf-Astoria Bar Book, one of the most important collection of pre-Prohibition cocktail recipes, has finally been given a makeover. Frank Caiafa, manager at the **Peacock Alley** (<https://peacockalley.com/>), the lobby bar at New York's renowned Waldorf Astoria, has dusted off A.S. Crockett's bar books, and augmented them with his own recipes, as well as many other classic drinks omitted in the

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1930's manuals. The results are nothing short of amazing: Caiafa managed to condense years of research into a 400-pages book, containing hundreds of thoroughly investigated drink formulas spanning over 120 years of mixing history.

A Tale of Two Cousins

Long before the Savoy's

American

Bar

([https://i2.wp.com/justcocktails.org/wp-](https://i2.wp.com/justcocktails.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Old-Waldorf-Astoria-Hotel.jpg)

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The old Waldorf Astoria Hotel, on Fifth and 33rd, in 1902. Photo from the archives of Detroit Photography

(<http://www.fairmont.com/savoy-london/dining/americanbar/>) became known as the most famous hotel bar in the world, the title arguably belonged to the Bar at the old Waldorf-Astoria, a massive hotel that stood proud on Fifth Avenue in New York City. The Waldorf-Astoria was born from the merger of two ritzy hotels, built right next door from each other by two cousins, both designed to be more grand and awe-inspiring than even the most prestigious **Madison Square** (<http://justcocktails.org/2015/02/26/elk-fizz-hoffman-house-bartenders-guide/>) addresses that wowed the city a generation before.

When the Waldorf Hotel first opened in 1893 on Fifth and 33rd, it was one the world's most expensive buildings, financed by **William Waldorf Astor** (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Waldorf_Astor,_1st_Viscount_Astor), heir of the prominent Astor family. It was quickly joined in 1897 by the bigger Astoria Hotel, built with the same spirit of splendor by Astor's cousin, **John Jacob Astor IV** (<https://www.encyclopedia-titanica.org/titanic-victim/john-jacob-astor.html>). Both also embraced the same philosophy of catering to travelers as much as New York's socially prominent, with large ballrooms, restaurants and entertainment venues. To avoid what was shaping up to be a bitter and costly family feud, a truce was signed while the Astoria was still under construction. Both hotels were to operate under the same management, but each would retain their own separate services and lobbies, connected by a lavishly decorated 300 feet-long marble corridor nicknamed the Peacock Alley. Provisions were

made to allow for hallways and corridors to be bricked should the armistice fall through, but the alliance proved to be successful and both properties soon became known as the Waldorf-Astoria.

The merger created a behemoth of a hotel, at the time the biggest in the world, with 1300 guest rooms each equipped with a telephone and electricity. The Waldorf-Astoria featured amenities such as parlors, reading rooms, a banquet hall that could sit 700 guests and even an **in-house cigar rolling factory** (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waldorf-Astoria_Cigar_Company). To man their restaurant, meant to rival the finest in the city, Waldorf-Astoria poached a bunch of employees from Delmonico's, including their young maître-d', **Oscar Tschirky** (<http://www.famoushotels.org/article/965>).

A “Laboratory of Bacchic Endeavor”

(<https://i2.wp.com/justcocktails.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/1910-Peacock-Alley-was-a-three-hundred-foot-long-corridor-connecting-the-Waldorf-and-Astoria-Hotels.jpg>)

The lavish 300 foot corridor that connected the two lobbies of the Waldorf and Astoria Hotels, known as Peacock Alley

The old Waldorf Bar itself was worth the visit. In *Old Waldorf Bar Days* (1931), journalist **Albert Stevens Crockett**

(<http://www.diffordsguide.com/class-magazine/read-online/en/2011-08-02/page-4/bar-icon>) reminisced with stories and anecdotes involving the famous and wealthy that frequented the Bar, which he described as a “laboratory of Bacchic endeavor.” Less extravagant than the equally famous **Hoffman House Bar** (<http://justcocktails.org/2015/02/26/elk-fizz-hoffman-house-bartenders-guide/>), its main competitor at the time, the Waldorf Bar was one of the first to serve both men and women. The centerpiece was two large carvings of a bull and a bear, symbols of Wall Street, resting on top of a large refrigerator behind the bar. Many iconic drinks were born there: the Robert Burns, the Rob Roy (**likely created by bartender John O'Connor** (<http://justcocktails.org/2014/02/06/rob-roy-cocktail-bartender/>)), the **Charlie Chaplin** (<http://www.cocktailchronicles.com/2009/04/20/3030-4-charlie-chaplin/>), the **Clover Club** (<http://imbibemagazine.com/clover-club/>)(a Philadelphia creation popularized by Waldorf head barman Michael Killackey), the **Suburban**

(http://smallscreennetwork.com/video/654/cocktail_spirit_suburban), the **Liberal** (<http://blog.vincekeenan.com/2014/03/cocktail-of-week-liberal.html>) (created by Mike Monahan), the **Fanciulli** (<http://www.seriousseats.com/recipes/2013/10/fanciulli-cocktail-bourbon-rye-fernet-vermouth-drink-recipe.html>), and the **Bronx** (<http://www.esquire.com/food-drink/drinks/recipes/a3722/bronx-drink-recipe/>), the drink that outsold them all, credited to bartender and Spanish-American War veteran **Johnnie Solon** (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB114504694150826369>).

All this wasn't enough to save the Waldorf-Astoria: by end of the 1920's, the hotel was facing expensive upgrades to keep up with the increasing standards. It became obvious the most economical approach was to build a new hotel from scratch. A new location was proposed a few blocks further north on Park Avenue, and in May 1929, the old Waldorf-Astoria shut its doors for good. Demolition started shortly afterwards to make way for the Empire State Building.

The new Waldorf Astoria, built in the midst of Prohibition, didn't have a bar, but one was added shortly after Repeal with the **opening of the Men's Bar** (<http://www.hosttotheworld.com/omeka/items/show/489>) in 1934. Picking up right where things were left in 1919, veteran barkeep John O'Connor got to mix for Oscar Tschirky the very first cocktail served in the new hotel. The crowds had gotten a little thinner and a little older, as the generation that grew up during Prohibition preferred rowdier venues such as the **Stork Club** (<http://time.com/3876573/nightclub-hand-signals-a-primer-from-new-yorks-legendary-stork-club/>) and 21 Club. It was a blessing in disguise: while some might say New York's Waldorf became a bit conservative when it came to drinking, others would agree that in keeping with its traditions it prove to be one of the last bastion of classic bartending in America, focused on doing things right rather than chasing the latest trends. (<http://justcocktails.org/2016/06/18/the-waldorf-astoria-bar-book-the-peacock/old-waldorf-astoria/>)

Black and white photograph depicting the Bar Room at the Old Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. The bar was closed and dismantled in 1919 in response to prohibition. It was replaced by a men's reading room, lounge and cafe.

A Makeover 80 Years in the Making

In 2005, however, the Hotel felt the time was ripe to shake things up a bit. People and the media had started to pay attention to

(https://i1.wp.com/justcocktails.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/large_Frank-Caiafa-Waldorf-Bar-Book-03.jpg)

*Frank Caiafa, at the modern Peacock Alley Bar, at the Waldorf Astoria New York.
Photo by Waldorf Astoria*

craft bartending, and **Andrew Saunders** (<https://www.star chefs.com/cook/chefs/bio/audrey-saunders>) had already been getting some serious buzz after taking over the **Bemelmans Bar** (<http://www.rosewoodhotels.com/en/the-carlyle-new-york/dining/bemelmans-bar>) at the Carlyle, a few block up the road. The Peacock Alley lounge got renovated and Frank Caiafa was hired as bar manager. They had found the perfect guy for the job: being a fan of classic cocktails and their history, Caiafa understood better than anyone else the value of the old Waldorf Bar's legacy. Yet he also knew that bringing back this legacy to the forefront had to be a slow, natural process, and that at the end of the day, a bartender's first responsibility is towards his guests:

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“We are here to put smiles on people’s faces and to help create memories. If we procure that smile from an archival cocktail that was served in Old Bar a hundred years ago, or from the finest Bay Breeze this particular guest has ever had, it doesn’t matter in the least. To me, especially today, when everyone’s time is at a premium, the more welcoming we can make our guests’ experience, the better off everyone will be.” —Frank Caiafa

Caiafa initially spent countless time in between his shifts at the Hotel and his various consulting gigs to research about cocktails, and published his finds on his blog, **handlebarsnyc** (<http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?>

curiosity eventually turned to the old Waldorf Astoria recipe books. While A. S. Crockett 1934 manual had never gone out of print, it had never been updated. Once the idea of dusting off the *Old Waldorf-Astoria Bar Book* took hold, it didn't let go. Caiafa realized early on this 5-year project he first had to gather many sources where Waldorf Astoria drink recipes had been disseminated. The oldest, *Drinks*, had been published in 1914 by a good friend of Oscar Tschirky **Jacques Straub** (http://wiki.webtender.com/wiki/Jacques_Straub). Tschirky himself published *100 Famous Cocktails* under his pen name 'Oscar of the Waldorf' in 1934. Two major sources were A. S. Crockett's tomes, the 1931 *Old Waldorf-Astoria Bar Days*, a fascinating collection of stories surrounding the old bar with a sizeable drink section in the annex, as well as the aforementioned 1934 compendium, which was lighter on the text and heavier on the drink. Finally, Ted Saucier's *Bottoms Up* (1951) also contained several post-Prohibition Waldorf recipes.

(<https://i0.wp.com/justcocktails.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Tale-of-Two-Roberts-Waldorf-Bar-Book.jpg>)

The book, with its clean design and many illustrations penned by Josie Portillo, has the look and feel of Repeal-era cocktail manuals. Photo by JustCocktails

It is difficult to overstate the staggering amount of research that went into *The Waldorf-Astoria Bar Book*. Prefaced by a short history of the Hotel, *The Bar Book* opens up with a short section on how to set up a home bar, with some recipes to prepare syrups, bitters and other DIY substitutions for obscure ingredients called for in the book. For the remaining 350-pages, reader will find a trove of hundreds of drinks with their variations, each of which is thoroughly investigated and rendered with Caiafa's preferred ratios, along with the labels he prefers to make the best out each beverage. Throughout his book, Caiafa speaks with the confidence and authority of an industry veteran, and cares to explain the ratios he chose and the origin of the drinks. Anyone who's ever made a drink will appreciate the countless hours Caiafa spent on top of his daily grind mixing, balancing, comparing and taking notes, putting together this impressive compendium one drink at a time.

(<https://i2.wp.com/justcocktails.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Waldorf-Bar-Book.jpg>)

anachronistic, as if published in the 30's only to be recently rediscovered. Black ink on off-white paper, with no images save for some lovely illustrations penned by **Josie Portillo** (<http://www.portilloillustration.com/>), Caiafa has authored a heartfelt tribute to the work of the bartenders that preceded him. Most of the recipes are pretty straightforward, the products he prefers are mid-priced and most drinks call for classic bartending techniques easy to repeat at home. The only issue I had is that the book could use a dust jacket to protect the delicate buckram hardcover, which I got stained in no time even though I was handling it carefully. The average person might be intimidated by the scope of the book and puzzled with how to adapt recipes to match the bottles they have on hand, but I doubt Caiafa meant *The Bar Book* to be an introduction to shaking and stirring. For anyone who's got past the basics, *The Waldorf-Astoria Bar Book* is nothing short of a terrific recipe book I highly recommend to cocktail enthusiasts, and an essential reference manual professional bartenders will be using for years to come.

Frank Caiafa, *The Waldorf-Astoria Bar Book*, Penguin Books, hardcover USD\$15 – CDN\$29

The Peacock

With so much myth and history surrounding the Peacock Alley, it's to be expected the name

(<https://i0.wp.com/justcocktails.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/The-Peacock-Waldorf-Bar-Book.jpg>)
The Peacock, from the pages of Frank Caiafa's new book. Photo by JustCocktails

inspired a few Waldorf Astoria cocktail. Caiafa includes 5 drinks named 'Peacock' or 'Peacock Alley' in his book, each with their own story. The oldest and simplest one of the pack, however, really stands out. According to Frank Caiafa, "this short, complex, and flavorful tippie stands as one of the finest surprises in the entirety of the Old Books. The creaminess of the cognac, the orange notes of the Amer, and the lingering flourishes of the absinthe all compete yet reside so harmoniously together, it's a must-try."

2 oz Rémy Martin 1738 Accord Royal Cognac [we used Dartigalongue Réserve Bas-Armagnac VSOP]

¼ oz Bigallet China-China Amer

1 dash Émile Pernet Vieux Pontarlier absinthe

Stir and strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Garnish with a lemon peel (we added a salmon-berry for a bit of BC flair)

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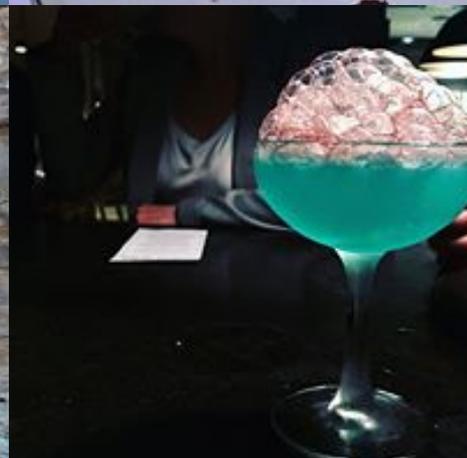
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