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Drink up

Critics' pick Review



Sphere of influence The cocktail world has always been a stylish one. From the glasses to the garnishes, a drink's look is almost as vital as its taste. The latest in cool cocktail accessories can be found floating in the **Lower East Side Globe Trotter** (\$13) at **PDT** (113 St. Marks Pl between First Ave and Ave A, 212-614-0386). This elegant, citrusy blend of rye, cognac, Creole Shrub and Bénédictine—the creation of Jean Georges pastry chef and part-time barkeep Johnny Iuzzini—is a vehicle for PDT's latest foray into specialty ice. Each Globe Trotter is cooled not by a cube—that's totally squaresville, man!—but a huge sphere made with a coveted Taisin Japanese ice press. The Taisin uses only the natural forces of gravity and temperature to turn frozen chunks into perfect spheres. The globe is a good match for the Trotter—this sipping drink benefits from its steady chill. Since each ball takes a couple of minutes to form, the prep happens pre-service. Sorry, gadget geeks: no demonstrations of the press. You'll have to order a drink to orbit this globe.—*Robert Simonson*

Cornelius

★★★★★

565 Vanderbilt Ave at Pacific St, Prospect Heights, Brooklyn (718-398-6662). Subway: B, Q to Seventh Ave; 2, 3 to Grand Army Plaza. Daily 5pm–2am. Average drink: \$10.

Once a novelty, the gastropub is practically run-of-the-mill these days. Pork-slinging, whiskey-soaked saloons are sprouting up in every self-respecting 'hood, from the West Village's Wilfie & Nell to Cornelius, a two-month-old Prospect Heights haunt. Nineteenth-century railroad tycoon Cornelius Vanderbilt inspired the bar's name and sumptuous aesthetic: dark wood, dangling acorn-shaped lights, gold window lettering, and enough costly Scotches and whiskeys to evoke a more prosperous era—like 2008. But this is '09, and thankfully, there's tremendous value to be found at Cornelius's tile-topped bar—the generous weekday happy hours featuring discounted drafts and one-buck oysters are popular among the youngish bar-going set. But the real draw here is the 200-plus collection of spirits, from such impeccable boutique distillers as Tuthilltown (try the woody Hudson Baby Bourbon) and Blue Coat, which makes a fantastic floral gin. The spirit menu's omission of descriptions can be maddening, but the informed bartenders will eagerly offer input or mix dead-on cocktails dreamed up by the Royalton Hotel's mixologist, Somer Perez. Her red-tinted Long Island "Railroad" Tea (*rooibos* tea,



The Long Island "Railroad" Tea, left, and the Steamboat

whiskey, bourbon, lemon juice and Grand Marnier) is a sweet, nutty punch with a citric tang. The apple-ginger margarita (tequila, apple chutney, ginger, orange zest) is a zippy, palate-tingling reviver, while the warming bourbon-and-bitters Steamboat is a maple-syrup-spiked riff on the Manhattan. Occasionally, playful ingredients create catastrophes, like the overly herbaceous Cornelius (gin, honey, lime and too much muddled sage). If you're off the hard stuff, opt for a notable draft beer: The rotating taps include standouts such as Kelso's orange-kissed St. Gowanus Belgian ale and Goose Island's decadent

Bourbon County Stout. These strong brews and cocktails demand serious grub, and ex-Freemans sous chef Michelle Hanna is up to task, with a winning menu of classed-up comfort food. The gooey mac and cheese is crowned with crisp *lardons* and a tangle of arugula, while her hefty pulled-pork sliders are dressed with black-bean mash and spicy jalapeños. Most addictive are the cornmeal-fried pickled veggies, greasy goodies best dunked in a zesty red-pepper sauce. Great drinks and grub to boot? The city's gastropub club may be getting crowded, but with triumphs like these, Cornelius is a welcome addition.—*TONY*

Eat Out

Circa Tabac



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The Last Bar by Nick Tosches

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I know the dirty secret of why and how the no-smoking con went down. It doesn't matter. What matters is that there's still a joint —**Circa Tabac**—where I can go, set myself down, order a drink, and light up. One last breath of life in this dying hick-town mall that used to be Manhattan. A real bar, with real ashtrays and real people. I used to call it the last bar in New York. Now that London and even Paris have folded, I call it the last bar, period. And that's what it is: a bar that is as bars once were, and as bars should be. The last of them. See you there, baby, see you there.

PHOTOGRAPHS: ROVANA MARCOQUIN