

# Cool People Doing Incredible Things

## Creating a Career with the U.S. Bartenders' Guild



**T**here was a time when working as a bartender was something you did while figuring out what job you really wanted to do.

Those days are gone — and the United States Bartenders' Guild wants to help people develop skills that will help promising mixologists along that career path.

"We've built a lot of programming for professional development," says Martha Mack, president of the United States Bartenders' Guild, Green Mountain Chapter. "We let guild members know about opportunities on a national level — things that are great if you're just starting out. Or even things you may not know exist even if you're in the bartending world. So, it's great for professional development and it's a way to meet other people doing different things in the world of bartending."

The United States Bartenders' Guild works to enhance the image of the profession, support the wine and spirits industry and related trades, and improve customer-bartender relations. The benefits of membership range from sharing tips and tricks with fellow pros and learning about new trends and products, to creating a sense of community throughout the state.

"As the Green Mountain Chapter, we're the only state chapter," Mack says. "Typically, it goes by city, but even in Burlington we probably don't have enough of a population to have a guild — so we're a state chapter. It's worked

out really well for us. When you're going from the top of the state to some place like Brattleboro, it can be kind of far, but it's a great way to tie the whole state together."

Mack, who recently worked as Director of Beverage Programming at Stonecutter Spirits, in Middlebury, first came to the Guild soon after chapter founders began working to create a Vermont branch in 2015. It was then that Mack won the inaugural Vermont Bartender of the Year competition — one of the annual marquee events sponsored by the Guild. She won that year with her own "24 Karat" cocktail, which was built by using Vermont Spirits' Vermont Gold Vodka. (See *recipe on page 6*.)

"I was the only girl in the competition," Mack says. "And as someone who was from outside of Chittenden county back then, I didn't know anyone else in the competition. It was somewhat intimidating but it was great."

### How did you first get behind the bar?

**Martha Mack:** "I worked as a bartender while I was in grad school. I did it on the side, and then when I moved back to Vermont, I managed a bar program. I kind of fell into it as something to do while I was figuring out what to do with my actual degree. I learned that I

really loved it. It allowed me to be creative in designing cocktails."

### How did you get involved with the Bartenders' Guild?

"I knew the founders socially and I knew it was something I wanted to be involved in. There weren't any women on the board at that point, and I was outside of Chittenden County and Burlington, so I wanted to make sure there were different perspectives and voices in the Guild. I was excited about it. It's an elected position now, but at that point we were just building it."

### How would the Bartenders' Guild have helped you when you were starting out?

"Socially and through professional development. It can help you build a robust social network, partly because the meetings are based around the hours that bartenders typically work. We have our meetings and events mid-afternoon instead of on, say, a Friday night. Also, from winning (the Vermont Bartender of the Year Competition), I met Sas — the co-founder of Stonecutter. I owe a lot of my professional development in bartending to the Guild."

### What goes on at Guild meetings?

"We tend to talk about upcoming events like the Bartending Competition. We talk about raising money for different causes. It's built into our mission that we want to have a fundraising or community engagement component. We always have people that want to talk about the cool things they're doing. It might be a producer who is making great spirits in the state. And we always have a beverage sponsor so there's always a cocktail or a drink. Our next meeting is at Wolf Tree in White River Junction, which just opened up in the southern part of the state. We like to get people out to different places and get them excited about new bars."

### What advice would you give to aspiring bartenders?

"It's something the bar manager at Leunig's Bistro told me: read 'The Joy of Mixology.'"

## BEHIND THE BAR

It's something he typically recommends to anyone who wants to be a bartender. It's a relatively old book — not like one of the new, flashy publications, but it teaches you a lot about relationships from drink to drink. It's a little bit of a cheat sheet on how cocktails relate to each other. If you're looking to train or get a foot in the door, I'd say put in the effort to get that baseline knowledge. You'll be seen as taking it seriously. It's a good jumping-off point for bar and cocktail knowledge. And listen to your peers. So many people have been in this industry for so long, and probably know your

bar backwards and forwards. Take it in and you'll be ready to go in no time."

### What's your favorite part of working behind the bar?

"What I have always loved about bartending is that it is such a unique opportunity to be social, but in a way that's very prescribed. I'm not an extrovert normally, but it's a great opportunity to connect with people. Also, it partners that with such a landscape of creativity in a way not found in a lot of other jobs. You constantly get to learn and try to be creative."



### 24 Karat

courtesy Martha Mack

- 1½ ounces Vermont Spirits  
Vermont Gold Vodka
- ½ ounce Cointreau
- ¼ ounce St. Germain
- ¼ ounce brandy from brandied apricots
- ¼ ounce fresh orange juice
- 1 egg white
- 3-4 slices of cucumber wheels
- 3-4 green cardamom pods, muddled

Place cucumber, cardamom pods, orange juice and brandy from brandied apricots in shaker glass. Muddle. Add all remaining ingredients except egg white in the shaker. Fill with ice. Shake vigorously for 8-12 seconds. Discard ice. Add egg white. Dry-shake for 30-40 seconds until foamy. Strain into coupe glass. Garnish with cucumber wheel.

### What's the best advice you can give to someone considering bartending as a career?

"The best time to do it, to get into bartending, is now. So many people understand that it can be a career — not just something you can do until you find your career. In this small state we have some really cool people dedicated to bartending and doing incredible things and making it their life. Now is the time to get into bartending and to take it seriously and have others take you seriously for doing it." 🍸

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