

Serious About Sustainability

It's all about keeping it local at Hen of the Wood



Maggie Bozzuti, the bar manager at Hen of the Wood in Burlington, brings science to the table (or, in this case, the bar). After working in biotech for about a year and a half, Bozzuti felt called back to the world of hospitality. She'd developed an appreciation for the industry — and sourcing locally — at jobs she held during her time at Saint Michael's College, in particular at Misery Loves Co. in Winooski, where she worked for a time after graduating.

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So, what prompted the return to restaurants? “I really like the interaction with people,” Bozzuti says. “I like curating an experience for people. I also think with a biology background, my interest in food, wine and beverage is pretty strong. I have a background in plant science for the most part, and a lot of those things interact — agriculture and soil science, winemaking,” she explains.

After some time learning more about sustainable farming practices at the nonprofit and educational Shelburne Farms, she transitioned to Hen of the Wood, where she began as a host and back server, eventually making her way behind the bar and then to bar manager.

Hen of the Wood is serious about sustainability and sourcing locally, an ethos the entire staff gets behind, says Bozzuti. “I think, first of all, the educational drive of the staff makes a really huge difference,” she says. “The desire to really want to learn more about the ingredients we're using, and the producers we represent.”



The menu, which changes often, is “very locally and regionally driven,” says Bozzuti. In Vermont, that’s not necessarily unique to Hen of the Wood (a fact that Bozzuti calls “awesome”), but it’s the dedication of the employees that makes the restaurant really stand out, she explains. Everyone, she says, from support staff to management, is knowledgeable and passionate about the sources they use. “Hopefully,” she says, “that translates into the guest experience.”

What was your first night behind the bar like?

“My first night bartending was at Misery Loves Co. Mike Dunn was my first teacher of all things bar-related. He was an awesome teacher. I’ve been lucky to learn from a handful of the best bartenders in this town through my journeys through different restaurants. It was a little stressful, but I’ve learned over the years that the most important thing is to stay calm and tackle the cocktails as best you can and try to stay organized.”

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En Fuego

courtesy Hen of the Wood Burlington

- 1 ¾ ounces Xicaru Mezcal (silver)
- ¾ ounce habanero honey (which is made from a fermented habanero hot sauce blended with honey)
- ½ ounce lemon juice
- 1 ounce pineapple juice
- Lime wedge for garnish

Combine the ingredients in a shaker. Shake, then double strain into a large rocks glass with ice. Garnish with a lime wedge and serve.



What was your most memorable night behind the bar?

“We did a ticketed 12-person dinner at our butcher’s table in the back open part of the kitchen at Hen. Sophia Barsalow from Barr Hill came in and joined the dinner. She chatted about their spirits and did a little tasting with each of those, and paired each course with a cocktail that often used similar ingredients. We had Tom Cat braised pork shoulder, and in the same course we had a Tom Cat Gin cocktail. It was fun to be able to have that conversation with both sides — to be able to collaborate. Those are the fun nights for sure.”

What cocktail is Hen of the Wood best known for?

“In general, we do a lot of the classics really well. We have a lot of cocktails on the menu. We’re not reinventing the wheel by any means, but we’ll often put a slight change or a new take on a classic. Because the menu does change regularly, we’ve got some staples — the Vodka Fix, the Citrus Gimlet. But the bestseller right now is the En Fuego.”

Share a behind-the-bar secret.

“After doing quite a bit of training over the past few months, given the shifts in the industry, I just remind people to try their best, to take a deep breath, keep calm and keep their station clean and organized. A clean, put-together workspace can alleviate stress in the moment.”

What advice would you give to aspiring bartenders?

“I would say to watch and learn whenever they can. I’ve definitely learned everything I’ve learned from always wanting to be present for those opportunities — to figure out how to do something new or to be available to new opportunities.”

At the end of a shift, I ...

“I usually thank everyone for all their hard work throughout the night and hope everyone’s spirits are still high, and we all take a mutual deep breath. Then I decompress, go home to my dog (an Australian Shepherd) and start the next day.”

If I wasn’t doing this, I would be ...

“At some point in my life I may want to get back into the research side of the world, maybe a little focused on some form of botany — whether it’s in the wine world or more in herbal or the plant medicine side of things. Right now, this is a good intersection for me between being able to interact with people, work as a team, and yet I know that biology really helps you everywhere.”

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