

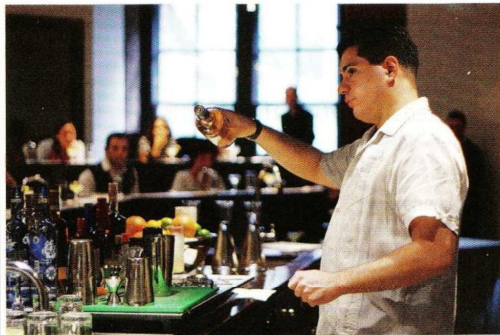
Pisco Sour
1 egg white
0.75 oz. lemon juice
0.75 oz. sugar syrup
2 oz. pisco
Dash of Angostura
bitters
Shake first four ingredients together in a chilled cocktail shaker. Add ice and shake again. Strain into a glass and add the dash of bitters.

DRINKS

Party Like a Pro

Sasha Petraske, the cocktail guru behind New York's Milk & Honey bar, tells his secrets for making proper drinks for a crowd. **By ELIN MCCOY**

MASTER DRINK SLINGER and bar impresario Sasha Petraske pops a large block of ice from a plastic mold, sets it on a cutting board and, wielding the muddler end of a bar spoon like an ice pick, stabs its center. Then he trims each resulting piece of the block by chipping it with the back of the spoon. "You can't make good drinks with bad ice," he says. "As with wine, temperature is as important as taste."



That was hint No. 1 in Petraske's home-bartending seminar, held this past fall as part of a preview of the Manhattan Cocktail Classic coming in May. When tickets for Petraske's event at the Astor Center downtown were posted online, they sold out in three minutes. That's because the media-shy 36-year-old is a hero of today's retro-cocktail revolution. His five speak-easy-style New York cocktail lounges—Milk & Honey, The East Side Company Bar, Little Branch, White Star and Dutch Kills—have inspired cult followings. Who better to advise on how to make and serve great drinks at home?

"Before you even think of giving a party, clean out your freezer and dedicate it to ice," Petraske says as he piles the ice pieces in a metal bowl and stashes it in the freezer behind him. "Get rid of the fish sticks; ice absorbs flavors the way cheese does." Petraske's bars freeze filtered water, but New York tap water will do.

Setting up a proper home bar is key if you want to make cocktails as good as Milk & Honey's. Petraske says it's more about process than recipes. He has strong views about logistics, bar tools and ingredients.

Take glassware. On the counter in front of Petraske are six styles he considers essential: 6-ounce (177-milliliter) flutes; champagne saucers; and tulip-shaped wine, 12-ounce rocks, 10-ounce old-fashioned and 12-ounce tall highball glasses. Having more than enough—four dozen of each for 24 guests—means not having to wash any during a party. He chills glasses in the refrigerator or

Tickets for bar entrepreneur **Sasha Petraske's** cocktail seminar sold out in three minutes.

PETRASKE POTIONS

The Outcome
0.33 oz. Averna (a Sicilian amaro, a slightly bitter digestif)
0.66 oz. sweet vermouth
2 oz. rye whiskey
Stir ingredients in an old-fashioned glass and garnish with an orange peel.

Apple Blow Fizz
0.75 oz. lemon juice
0.75 oz. sugar syrup
2 oz. applejack
1 egg white
Club soda
Shake first four ingredients in a chilled cocktail shaker. Add ice and shake again. Strain into a highball glass and top off with club soda. Garnish with an apple or lemon slice.

freezer to keep ice from melting and diluting a drink's flavors.

Petraske is just as opinionated about equipment. For shaken cocktails, like the frothy, tangy Apple Blow Fizzes we students are sipping, he suggests a Manhattan shaker set and a metal mixing glass, which won't break as big pieces of ice hit its sides. In fact, for a big party, Petraske advises having several of both tools so you can shake two drinks at a time.

A long-handled bar spoon with a muddler at the other end is essential for stirred cocktails, such as classic martinis and old-fashioned. A conical jigger, with a 1-ounce measure on one end and a 2-ounce measure on the other, is easier for pouring. Two metal strainers—a Hawthorn and a julep—remove ice after drinks are shaken or stirred. "And I can't bartend without this 99 cent Swiss peeler," he says, showing us how to create a long piece of orange peel to garnish an old-fashioned.

Basic sweeteners—such as sugar and honey syrups—can be prepared and stored days in advance. Not juices, though; they must be fresh squeezed. "If lemon juice sits around more than a couple of hours, it tastes like Snapple," Petraske says as he halves limes and lemons on a cutting board and squeezes them in a hand-operated citrus press, his preference.

I'm surprised by Petraske's position on booze brands. A dozen top names are lined up on his makeshift bar, but he prefers middle-price-range basics. He figures on five drinks per person for a party, which translates into a hundred 2-ounce pours of spirits for 20 guests. His favorite drink? The pisco sour.

As Ivie Anderson and Duke Ellington play over the sound system, Petraske starts mixing up a half dozen different demo drinks, including The Outcome, which he'd invented that morning. He arranges glasses in a grid so he can make several at once. "When I opened Milk & Honey in 2000, it took me 20 minutes to make a drink," he admits. "Timing is important. No guest wants to wait long for a cocktail."

For a classic sidecar, Petraske adds lemon juice, Cointreau, cognac and ice to a shaker. He pumps the shaker up and down and strains the liquid into a champagne saucer. He always takes a sip through a coffee stirrer before serving a drink, to determine whether he needs to adjust the flavor. "It's incredibly important to do things right," he says. "Why else do it?"

Columnist **Elin McCoy** is based in New York. elinmccoy@gmail.com



The Booze Essentials

Basic spirits: gin, vodka, light rum, aged rum, blanco tequila, VSOP cognac, rye and bourbon whiskeys, blended Scotch whisky, applejack, cachaca and pisco

Basic liqueurs: dry and sweet vermouth, Grand Marnier, Cointreau, green Chartreuse, maraschino and Campari

For special drinks: absinthe, creme de violette, St-Germain, creme de menthe, Aperol, Averna, creme de cacao, benedictine, Licor 43, Fernet-Branca, Angostura bitters and Cherry Heering

LAURA MOSS (2); SAM MEYER (TOP)

For arts and culture news, **type MUSE <Go>**.