



Pioneering pub: New York's The Dead Rabbit



French touch: The Cambridge

of the core pillars of his business. "Having the best-in-class programme of Guinness, Irish Coffees, Irish whiskeys and spirits – those are three big things. Then everything being focused around service, orientation, and speed. Hospitality is critical in a pub – comfortability, that feeling of home, and serving everything fast, because it drives me nuts in cocktail bars when it takes forever to get a drink, forever to get somebody's attention. I hate friction in any type of setting, but particularly in a pub setting."

In the UK the story is much the same. At The George, an 18th-century Grade II-listed pub in London's Fitzrovia, complete with all the touchpoints of a traditional English boozier (wooden bar tops, ornate carpets), managing director Dominic Jacobs explains why the bar's sophisticated cocktail programme has been given the same focus as its more traditional beer and ale offerings.

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BAR-QUALITY COCKTAILS

He adds: "Some pubs have an amazing wine list, but you'd never go there for a cocktail or a cask ale. Another pub might do good cocktails, but people will say, 'well, it's not a pub'. I really wanted to take every category, cask ale, craft beer, really great pints of commercial beer, great wine lists, and also bar-quality cocktails, and put them together. But you have to create a drinks list that is 'doable' in a cocktail bar," he warns.

The George has received praise for its 'tiny cocktails', miniature versions of classics that allow punters to sample more from the menu, as well as its take on a Gibson Martini, which comes with pickled Monster Munch on the side. However, Jacobs notes that "if someone orders a load of cocktails that take ages to make, then that kind of ruins the pub experience for everyone". That's why, he clarifies, the bars have been designed around speed of service. "We pre-bottle a lot of things, while not compromising on quality. We focus on Highballs, we've got some cocktails that we do on draft, and we make those ourselves if it makes sense to do so."

I'm intrigued to know if Jacobs believes the British pub-meets-cocktail-bar concept could work beyond the boundaries of metropolitan cities, or in countries where pub culture isn't 'a thing'. "The Brits have the world's most revered drinking culture in the pub," he says.

"If you talk to anyone about a drinking establishment, the first thing that comes to mind is the pub. And if we look at every city in the world, you will undoubtedly find an Irish pub. So, arguably, it is the best export that there is in the world."

He is right. The pub is an establishment that appears to circumnavigate cultural boundaries, and with cocktail culture on the rise internationally, this combined concept style of venue has the ability to translate globally. For those curious to see how it's done, a trip to Paris's 3rd arrondissement will show how the French have achieved it. The Cambridge Public House describes itself as a British pub meets cocktail bar, and has all the aesthetic features you might expect to find in a modern pub, but its Parisian location means the cocktail influence shines stronger than it does back in Blighty.

In the creation of this relaxed and friendly venue, co-founder Hyacinthe Lescoët was inspired by London's public houses, and Paris's lack of anything similar. He says that while a lot of research went into every aspect of the bar, it was a welcoming speakeasy-style atmosphere that he was aiming to achieve to attract customers from all walks of life, as a traditional pub would.

"That's the beauty of a pub to me," McGarry concludes. "It's a democratised, egalitarian sort of space; while you might be rubbing up against somebody who maybe drinks in five-star hotels, you could also be rubbing up against somebody that's just finished a shift on a building site – it's people from all walks of life. We have a sign on the front of the door that says we are 'exclusive of no one, inclusive of everyone'. And that, to me, is the heartbeat of a pub." sb