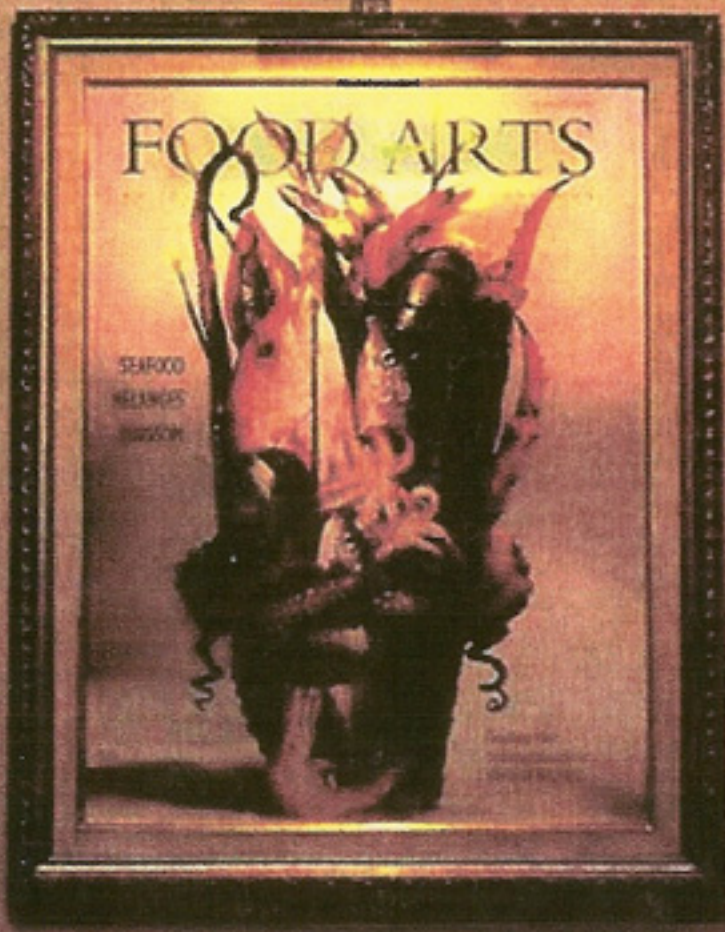


15<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY COLLECTOR'S ISSUE

DECEMBER

# FOOD ARTS

AT THE RESTAURANT AND HOTEL FOREFRONT



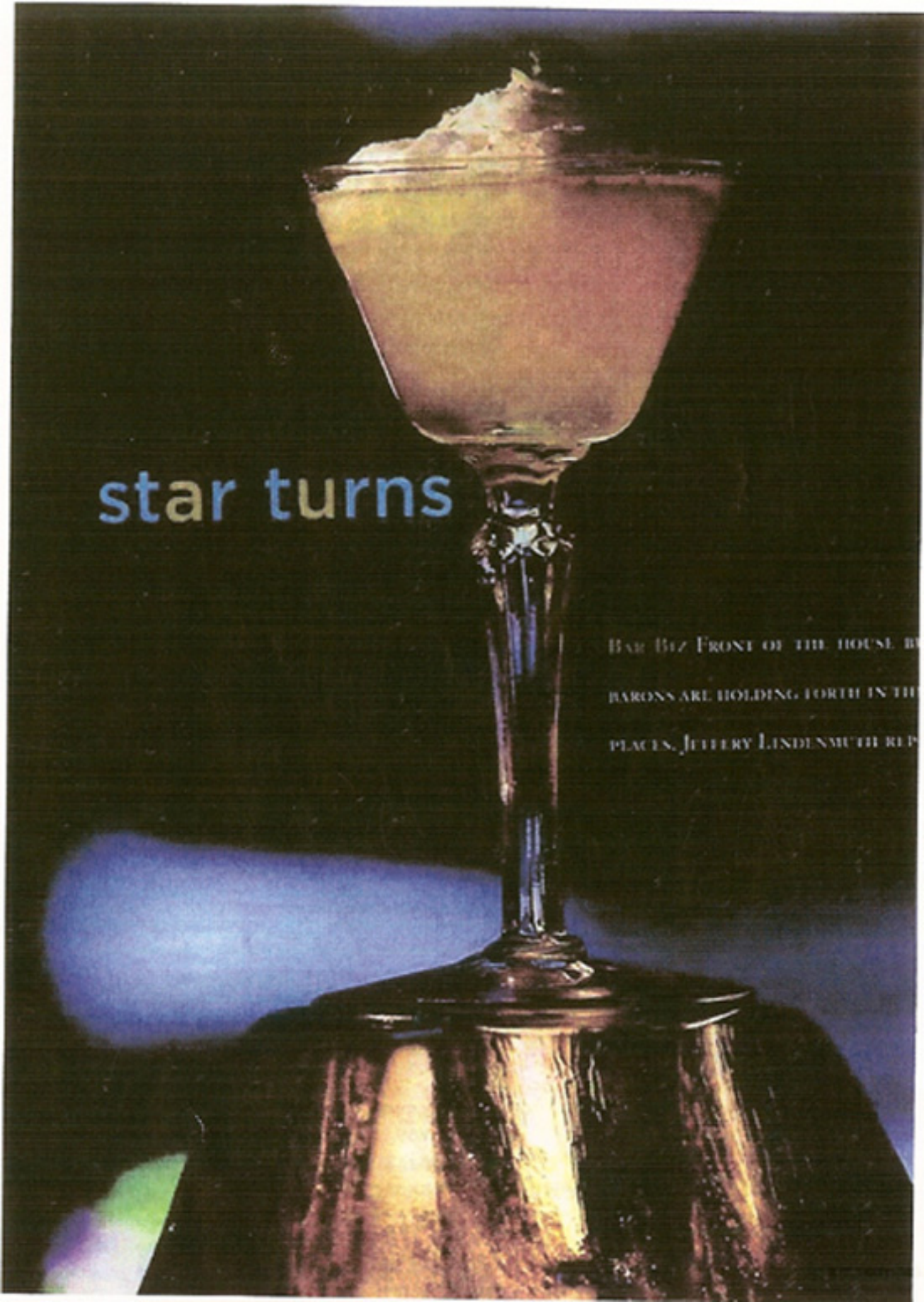
## 2003 IN REVIEW

EDITORS' RECIPE TREASURY

BLOCKBUSTER AMERICAN WINE LISTS

FIGHTING WORDS ON FOIE GRAS TERRORISM  
AND THE DEATH OF FAST FOOD

PLUS MUCH, MUCH MORE



star turns

BAR BIZ FRONT OF THE HOUSE. BARONS ARE HOLDING FORTH IN THE PLACES. JEFFERY LINDENMUTH REPS



Lucia Iliu's whitefish carp with a citrus emulsion at Hotel Garden, Washington, and a potato-walnut risotto from Hotel Palisades in New York.

"I had to cater to the owners and their content," says Rosoff, who regularly works the floor, educating and selling dinner to his somewhat esoteric lot of 140 wines.

Rosoff takes pride in that "most people are terrified to pick up a wine list," especially one like his, so he has taken steps to demystify the experience. Red and white wines are classified simply as light and not so heavy. Rather than "pigskinlike a goose," he writes for Pinot Noir on all three pages of reds or Riesling on all the pages of whites.

Rosoff favors short and often witty commentary over long words, scores, and cryptic viticultural information. Schlawgt's *Le Réve*, a GSM from Pinot Noir, pleads, "Don't hate me for being pink," while a 1999 Pinot Noir from Mar-a-Lago "Craves Ideas" explains, "Can that price be lower?" It's all part of a non-serious approach to some serious wines. "When people see I'm joking, they feel they can relax too, and it in turn forces the conversation," Rosoff says.

**cocktail cuisine** Inspired by the Italian tradition of *snobalé*, or perhaps the American Depression-era play of the free lunch, chefs are discovering that cocktails can be avant-garde companions for small bites of food. At Chickenshove cafe, praised for its "Brooklyn global cuisine," executive chef Zakary Pelaccio and cocktail consultant David Woodrich offer *The Bone with Beef*, a house cocktail of straight rye, lime, sugar, and Tabasco pepper sauce paired with dried beef from eastern Europe for \$7.

*Brennan's of Houston* adds a heavy handful of crab-crusted olives when serving its Creole Martini, a spicy concoction of Absolut Peppar, tomato juice, and Tabasco served up in a salt-and-pepper-rimmed glass. Jumbo olives stuffed with lump crabmeat receive a crustacean encrusting of crab cake before being fried to golden brown.

Not all pairings are so serious. The pop culture inspired *Hotel Helix Lounge* in Washington, D.C., offers a saccharine assault by garnishing a drink of crème de cassis, Malibu rum, Tia's liqueur, and half-and-half with a *Hotness Ding Derg*. They dub the kitschy creation the *Ding Derg-Tini* and serve it to sugar-high bachelors on disco night.

But cocktail cuisine reaches its zenith with New York City's *Citarella The Restaurant's* cocktail tasting menu, where bar chef Stefan Trummer presents four cocktails paired with equally fresh and lively dishes from executive chef Brian Blistrong (\$30, cocktails only; \$44, with food). "I think only in the past year did people realize how good cocktails can be, and this takes it to a whole different level, having food with each cocktail," says Trummer, the ambitious younger brother of Albert Trummer. "If a cocktail has a lot of flavors that's the key, then it's not difficult to find a food to go with it."

Blistrong actually creates each dish as a reaction to Trummer's inventive cocktails, offering accompaniments like pink snapper with butter lettuce and almonds with grapefruit/candied-flower sauce and topped with a zesty grapefruit foam as a complement to Trummer's *Titanic*, made with Citron vodka, muddled white grapes, elderflower cordial, and searfat, served up complete with ominous torching of Champagne sodas supplied by pastry chef Bill Yonnes.

For the dessert course, Trummer wishes a pepper roll and a grater with white chocolate as he garnishes a chocolate Martini made with Valrhona chocolate. For his part, Yonnes supplies a warm *pealine* stuffed tart. —J.J.

In contrast to that typical sommelier opener "What will you enjoy tonight?" Rosoff dives right into the list. It's honest even more guests than refer to him to make an appetizing wine order. "It's something that happens every night, and I think it's great because I can take the food orders away and tell the chef what to prepare."

When the chef is also the owner, it had better be "all about the food." But now that celebrated mixologists and sommeliers are enjoying the same notoriety once reserved for chefs and reclaiming their role as host, owner, and visionary in their own trendsetting establishments, it's unequivocally "all about the drinks."

When Julie Reiner opened Flatiron Lounge as a partner in Manhattan in May, her resurfacing had all the buzz associated with an Excite 1920s speakeasy albeit handied via bandwidth rather than whispered on Harlem street corners. Reiner had a considerable cult following from her stints at the defunct New York restaurants Alestia and C3, adjacent to the Washington Square Hotel, as well as a memorable consultancy at Link. "I think I definitely got people addicted to certain cocktails they couldn't get anywhere else, and it's great to see them returning now," says Reiner.

Ironically, her knack for creating a crowd has not always been embraced. "At C3, for example, the owner really wanted a restaurant, not a lounge, and many nights the bar crowd was so large it would spill over into the dining room." She even recalls feeling apologetic at one establishment when her drinks made yet another appearance in the *New York Times*, again outshining the chef. "I do think there are mixologists and bar chefs who need their own domain," she reflects.

Now, in her Art Deco-inspired space, Reiner has the creative control afforded only to those who hold the purse strings. Previously vetoed whims like cocktail flights and a menu in place that features 20 garnishes are fulfilled at Flatiron Lounge, where the 30-foot bar is up to the task of churning out high-quality cocktails. "We've got a really large well, designed to hold almost every bottle we need, and lots of different juices," says Reiner, who counts in her repertoire of

liquids guava, passion fruit, hibiscus, and other juices evocative her Hawaiian upbringing, as well as infusions of exotic teas.

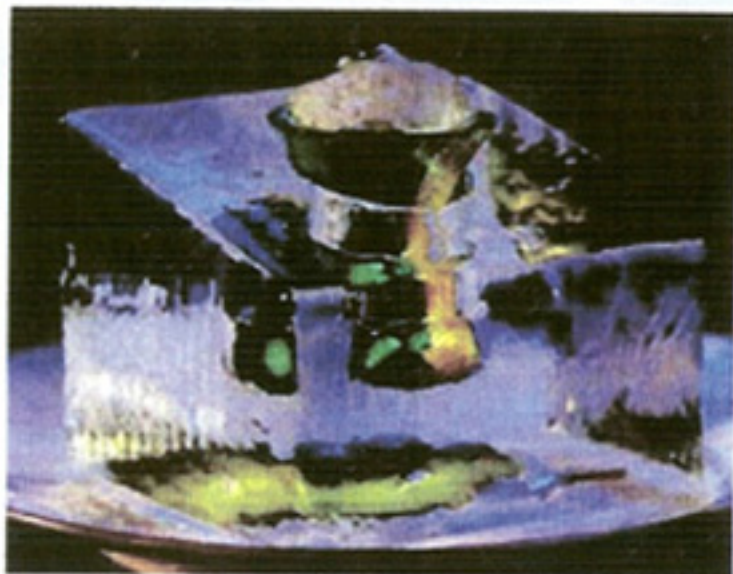
These juices define the house style of Flatiron's drinks: oft-elaborate, always fresh and seductive, their alcohol carefully concealed. In addition to "house cocktails," the menu has a section for "guest mixologists," attributing drinks to Dale DeGroff and other luminaries. "The whole place is an homage to cocktails, and I love

these drinks but didn't want to claim them as my own," says Reiner. The nightly cocktail flight includes three drinks, 3.5 ounces for \$18, and changes regularly; one evening the Tiki flight might list retort libations like Mai Tai, Singapore Sling, and Zombie; another, the Triple Crown might introduce three original Bourbon creations.

"We really just sat around and let the space dictate to what it wanted to be. We soon saw how crazy the bar area was and said, 'No way is someone coming through here without plates.'" As a result, the downstairs is set to open as *TI Paulie* at Flatiron, a quiet area for respite offering small

bites and special food as well as cocktails and cocktail theme nights such as *Trader Vic's* drinks with a pupu platter.

At *Opaline* in Los Angeles, David Rosoff, wine authority at former general manager and wine director for *Michael's Restaurant* in Santa Monica, has created a restaurant with regional European wines at the forefront. "I've always had to make concessions, and this was a chance to list everything I wanted. Previous



Culinary flair shimmers in the glass at *Truener Home*, where Albert Truener shows off cocktails with a *Herrense* flair. The Classic Daiquiri (above) is served, literally, on ice and topped with elderflower foam. The Hot & Cold Colada (left) presents a soft-serve sorbet of fresh pineapple, rum, Grand Marnier, and lime juice with a crown of warm coconut foam. Photos by Thomas Scherer.

You might think Long Island's North Fork would also be all about wine as well, but Albert Trummer, with the help of his brother Stefan, has changed that with a new cocktail enclave called *Trummer Home*, situated in an early 1900s Victorian house in Greenport. Trummer, a native of Vienna who made his debut in New York City at *Danube* and claimed his title as the

**don't call it happy hour** "Happy hour' makes you think fried stuff and bad wine," says Andrew Freeman, vice president of restaurant sales and marketing for *Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants*. The group has challenged its chefs to provide bar menus that are value oriented but still faithful extensions of their regular menus, sometimes going so far as to rename the bourgeois bargain hour. At *Ponzu* in San Francisco, patrons pack the house for *Feng Shui Hour*, seeking *Good Karma*, a signature blue cocktail, and appetizers like wasabi salmon with avocado, tomato *tobiko*, and sesame rice crackers, each costing just \$3. At Chicago's *Encore* and at *Topaz*, a lounge in Washington, D.C., similar special "hours" go by the moniker *Liquid Therapy*. "Instead of just serving people anything, we see it as a way to showcase our regular menu and maybe win people to stay on for dinner," says Freeman.

—J.L.

original bar chef at *Town*, says he searched two years before settling here, a short ferry ride from Shelter Island. "It's much the way a chef must travel for inspiration," says Trummer. "Manhattan was great but a little too big-business. Here we have a lot of artists and creativity and the coast."

Trummer mines the local farmers' market for seasonal fruits: "I pick up a nice melon or a white peach in the morning, and by the afternoon I have a drink with it." But Trummer continues to embrace imported ingredients for drinks like his *Truffle Martini*, which is akin to a *Sidcar* but uses sliced truffles soaked in *Grand Marnier*. Among his other drinks are pomegranate punch, a lemon-grass cocktail, and an elderflower cocktail—a sip from his Viennese roots made with an elderflower puree crafted to his specifications by an Old World producer of marmalade.

Aware that his customers could not quaff very many inventive cocktails without some sustenance, Trummer brought in Galen Zamorra, a former colleague at *Bouley*, to create a light menu consisting of grilled and raw seafood, including North Fork oysters, as well as panini and specialty cheese and meat plates modeled on the food of southern Spain. "It's great because out here the chef can also step behind the bar. Galen did a few shifts, and he came up with great ideas. He had a lot of groundwork in flavors, but mixing with alcohol was a new thing," says Trummer. "It used to be the chef stayed in the kitchen, but the new, young chefs no longer see the bar as separate. Here we can just share ideas with each other." ■