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SEPTEMBER

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SP FOOD



Seth Schiendeldecker,
Ecco bartender

SPARK ST. JUNE

BRITISH INVASION

The face behind Atlanta's No. 1 gin cocktail

BY HOPE S. PHILBRICK

Who makes the best gin cocktail in Atlanta? According to Bombay Sapphire, the answer is Seth Schiendeldecker.

BEHIND THE BAR This summer Bombay Sapphire U.S. Master Mixologist James Moreland traveled to 15 cities across the country—Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Minneapolis, Houston, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Seattle and Washington, D.C.—to select the most inspired cocktail at each stop along the way based on the criteria of balance, presentation, flavor and taste. All regional winners will be featured in the November issue of GQ magazine; the top three will be named in the December issue.

Tending bar at Ecco for the past year and a half, Schiendeldecker holds an introductory certificate in the Court of Master Sommeliers. He previously worked at One Midtown Kitchen, but work for him isn't limited to mixing up tasty liquid concoctions: His "day job," he says, is designing and manufacturing the Mickey Lynn women's jewelry line with his girlfriend.

The Sunday Paper recently talked with Schiendeldecker about the contest that's pushed him into the national spotlight.

Q What was involved with the contest?

A A Bombay Sapphire representative told me about a contest involving restaurants around the Atlanta metro area to create a new cocktail. The contest gave free rein; I just had to have Bombay Sapphire gin as the main ingredient. I met with James Moreland at Ecco. We talked about the cocktail, and he tasted it. That was his first experience with the drink. There was an event at Twist two days later where the drinks were recreated, but unfortunately I wasn't able to attend. I think

half the bartenders couldn't be there—it was on a Sunday evening, so we were working. Their bartenders prepared the drinks for those who couldn't be there, for quality control and all that. My drink was chosen as the winner. It's a great honor. I heard that there were a lot of great drinks and great competition.

How many versions of the drink went down the drain before you finalized the recipe?

None, I drank them all—just kidding [laughs]. I probably went through four or five versions. The inspiration was elderflower syrup. It has a magical smell. The syrup is very potent if used by itself. I felt it had to be used in a gin cocktail because of the floral botanicals in it. I tried one ounce of elderflower syrup at first. The stuff was overpowering, so I had to tone it down. I wanted to bring in a little more sweetness and keep that floral aspect in there, so I used it together with a lavender-infused simple syrup and then lemon juice to tone the syrups down with acid. Then peach bitters—we have a lot of fun bitters, and it's fun to play around with them to get certain flavor profiles. And a torn mint leaf. All the ingredients are shaken vigorously with ice and served straight up.

How does it taste, what's it called, and where can I get one?

It's sweet and acidic—nicely balanced. It's a floral drink with the mint, lavender and elderflower. I think vodka drinkers would love this drink because it's not over-the-top gin. At the same time, it doesn't mask anything; you can still tell what you're drinking. The other ingredients don't overpower the gin. It's called "Long Live the Queen." I didn't put much thought into the name. I was just thinking it's English. I like fun drink names that someone will remember. It's \$11, at Ecco. It will be on the cocktail menu through fall, but I think it could be enjoyed year-round. If it's a good seller, it might stay on the menu—usually good sellers stay, bad sellers we change.

Is gin your favorite spirit to work with?

Yes. It can be easily turned into anything that you want. I'm a classic gin drinker: I like a slightly dirty martini straight up. **SP**