

DAILY BEAST

STAR BARTENDER

Going 10 Rounds With Top Bartender Ryan Casey

The beverage director of The Dewberry Charleston Hotel tackles our speed round of questions.



Noah Rothbaum 04.12.19 4:44 AM ET



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What do you like to drink after a shift? “As boring an answer as it is, water. I crush ice water after work. We get so focused on the job and getting the night into a good rhythm I forget to stop and drink water most of the shift, so I’m always dehydrated after work. A cold beer isn’t a bad chaser.”

What is the all-time best dive bar jukebox song? ““Islands in the Stream” by Dolly Parton and Kenny Rogers.”

After all these years bartending and creating drinks, do you still enjoy going out to bars? “I absolutely love it. I still love the energy a good bar has, and I’m always excited to see what’s happening creatively.”



Name the first good drink you ever drank and where you had it. “A proper stirred Manhattan at a Del Frisco’s Steak House. I was young, maybe 22 or 23-years-old, the bartender asked me if I’d like it stirred or shaken, that question was a first for me. I went stirred and never looked back.”

What book on cocktails or spirits is your go-to resource? “*The PDT Cocktail Book* by Jim Meehan. It’s a modern-day cocktail bar how-to from start to finish.”

What’s your favorite cocktail and food pairing? “A Negroni and a hard cheese, like Parmesan.”

What drink are you most proud of creating? “The Ligurian Sea. It’s basically a Cynar Negroni with an absinthe float. The float leads to it evolving in the glass and changing as you drink it. Starts out great and it just gets better as you go.”



Is there one person (dead or alive) you'd like to make a cocktail for?
"Ina Garten."

What's your favorite shot-and-a-beer combination? "High Life and a Jameson."

What is the one tool that you always make sure to pack when you're traveling for business? "A pocket knife. It comes in handy more that you'd think behind a bar."

Ryan Casey is the beverage director of The Dewberry Charleston and runs the bars in the hotel's Living Room and Citrus Club.

Interview has been condensed and edited.