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**COCKTAIL  
LOVERS  
GUIDE**  
*to*

**RICHMOND**

by JOSH SEABURG | photography by ADAM EWING

**I**t's a good time for cocktails in our state's capital. Although Richmond has a rich drinking history dating back more than two centuries, over the past few years there's been an explosion of quality quaffs in the city. As a result, there's a daunting number of places to get a delicious drink. We took a spin around town to find the can't-miss cantinas, ranging from comfy and casual to lofty and austere. Here are some of our favorite spots and what to expect if you go.

Lindsey Scheer, bar manager at Heritage Restaurant.



## THE JASPER

3113 W. Cary St.

Stationed squarely in the middle of Carytown is one of the most lauded openings in Richmond cocktail history. The Jasper, owned by titans of industry Mattias Hägglund and Thomas Leggett, opened in 2018 serving – to paraphrase an illustration on the back bar – fair pours at honest prices. From the **Caribbean Kween**, featuring a molasses-infused Blackstrap Tequila and chile liqueur, to a draft Zombie, to an apple brandy and tonic, the entire menu reads as an homage to deliciousness without self-indulgence. The cocktails are served in a warmly decorated space meant to evoke the era of its namesake, Jasper Crouch, a circa-1800s Richmond bartender. The Jasper team also likes to change it up a bit, whether it's hosting cocktail competitions or whiskey events, or participating in a nationwide Christmas-themed pop-up. Bar seating and comfy banquettes abound.



## HERITAGE RESTAURANT

1627 W. Main St.

Since Heritage was one of the first bars to sling excellent craft cocktails in Richmond, its name is apropos. Though original bar manager (and onetime co-owner) Mattias Hägglund moved on to open The Jasper, it's now manned by an absolute powerhouse: Lindsey Scheer. Scheer serves a 12-seat bar with a warm welcome and an expert hand. Her menu is rooted in cocktails that are classic but with frequent, interesting twists. The Ex Lion Tamer is a perfect example. An array of bittered ingredients (four, in fact) add a spark to oloroso sherry without muddying flavors. The Caribe Negroni threatens tropicality on the nose but is an exercise in balance, with the infused Campari playing just right with the oaked rum. **The Marquee Moon**, on the other hand, exemplifies classic cocktail sensibilities – a brandy and rye whiskey sour, accented with red wine and Underberg, a German digestif that brings lovely Christmas flavors to the party. Scheer also makes interesting and often hilarious use of a food-safe printer, dispensing the occasional edible garnish printed onto rice paper.

## BRENNER PASS

3200 Rockbridge St.

The burgeoning Scott's Addition neighborhood has been anchored by the excellent bar and restaurant Brenner Pass. High ceilings and woody tones speak to its alpine influences, which inform almost every aspect of the menu, from kitchen to bar. The cocktail program is managed by rock star barkeep Shannon Hood, who says the key is fostering collaboration on her team, letting everyone's styles and personalities shine. "Our menu is them, and they are our bar," Hood says. The changing cocktail menu recently featured **Best in Show**, made with heirloom tomatoes, lemon, grapefruit, honey, green peppercorn, blanco tequila and mezcal; and Wasenhorn: Into the Sun, a concoction of peaches, bourbon, oleo saccharum and black walnut. Hood and James Kohler – the co-owner and bar director – say they want first-time guests to feel free to ask questions. "We want you to be happy, comfortable and love your drink," Kohler says.



\* Pictured cocktails noted in bold



## SAISON 23 W. Marshall St.

In its sixth year, Saison is a stalwart of the Richmond cocktail scene. Justin Ayotte, bar manager for the past two years, presents a menu developed around classic cocktails in a laid-back, approachable environment. Saison's late night is a moody, dark-lit cocktail den where Ayotte and his crew hold court. The spring menu was a remarkably gin-heavy departure from the usual Latin influence, featuring the **Ante Up**, a gin sour bolstered by Campari, Tempus Fugit Gran Clasico, strawberry and rosewater. The drink is made with egg white and shaken to a consistency that's reminiscent of a down pillow in the middle of a garden. In the regular rotation, Saison wields an impressive selection of agave spirits and a well-read staff to tell you about them.

## Other places not to miss

### ALEWIFE 3120 E. Marshall St.

Over in Church Hill, Alewife plays home to another fantastic woman-run bar program. Manager Katy Best has assembled a menu of low-proof but complex cocktails meant to pair with the food.

### RESTAURANT ADARRA

618 N. 1st St.

The former home of Rogue Gentlemen, bar manager Paul Blumer has been a fixture through both iterations, and this new space shows him coming into his own. The restaurant's Spanish flair is reflected in his menu, which means rum and fortified wines are big.



### TINY VICTORY 506 W. Broad St.

In the middle of a block on Broad, in an unassuming location, lies a fun and funky bar called Tiny Victory. The name is a testament to the current tenants' longevity – they've already outlasted the tenures of several previous occupants. The concept is heavily inspired by Filipino cuisine and a deep love for Pacific island ingredients. Check out their large-format cocktails, which are meant to serve two to four people.

### WEEZIE'S KITCHEN

3123 W. Cary St.

Weezie's has been around for more than 10 years but its cocktail renaissance began in March 2017. That's when manager Vanna Hem – known by everyone as V – took the lead. It's not the prettiest bar in the city, but the menu cocktails are delicious, the ice cut in house, and the technique masterful. Hem strives to serve quality drinks in a casual environment – and Weezie's delivers. ■