



The Booze Bibles

The father-and-son team of Jeff and Jonathan Pogash are quite literally rewriting the book on cocktails, one Bloody Mary and old-fashioned at a time.

WHY DON'T YOU FIX YOURSELF A DRINK, find an easy chair and sit back and relax. We're going to talk about *litra-choor*, as they say at Oxford.

And the drink I suggest you make yourself is an old-fashioned, made to the specifications of George J. Kappeler in 1895: *Dissolve a small lump of sugar with a little water in a whiskey-glass; add two dashes of Angostura bitters, a small piece of ice, a small lemon-peel, one jigger whiskey. Mix with a small bar spoon and serve.*

And why this drink you ask, as well you might? Because it's the first recipe in the new *Mr. Boston Official Bartender's Guide*, and you can stop making that face right now and just pay attention.

Yes, the (Old) *Mr. Boston* guide has been around forever and for nearly forever has been just terrible. Full of recipes calling for alarming liqueurs, bottled juice and sour mixes — not least because the *Mr. Boston* company manufactured (and that's the correct verb) many of these products.

But that was then, and this is now, when the new edition approaches literary heights heretofore unimagined by purveyors of peach schnapps. And we owe it — and another brand-new, even more literary publication — to a single father and son team. Pogash Pere et Fils, it ought to be called, and I think it's the only two-generation cocktail exegetical team in the English-speaking world.

Jonathan Pogash, the fils, has run The Cocktail Guru, a New York-based beverage consulting company for 15 years. If you make a habit of sipping drinks in upscale boites around the country, the odds are good you've tasted his creations. He also waxes eloquent about cocktails on NBC and sundry radio shows. Recognizing that we live in enlightened times, the people who now own Mr. Boston, the Sazerac company, hired Mr. Pogash and Rick Rodgers — cookbook author and chef — to co-edit a 75th-anniversary edition. The introduction to classic cocktails alone surpasses entire earlier editions, and while I didn't count the recipes, at 338 pages it's 124 pages longer than the 1976 edition on my shelves. I found nothing missing in the recipes — and that alone is remarkable — but for some of us, just the little advice about when to use the Hawthorne strainer (the one with the spring) versus the julep strainer (with the colander-like holes) is enough to put the book in the pantheon of mixological publications.

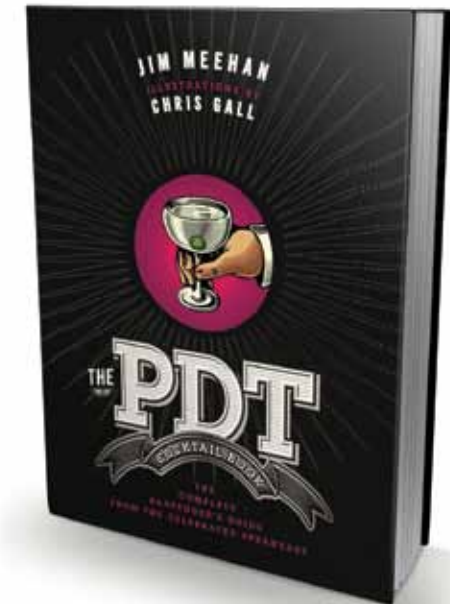
The new edition of Mr. Boston Official Bartender's Guide approaches literary heights heretofore unimagined by purveyors of peach schnapps.

Meanwhile, Jonathan's father, Jeff Pogash, is recently retired from a career promoting champagne (doing good works for widows — all those *veuves* — in the sparkler business) and other luxury spirits. He's now free to indulge his own passions, which include collecting cocktail literature and writing. (See his *How to Read a Wine Label*, Hawthorn Books, 1978, but still available from Amazon.com.) He's now written the definitive book on the history of the Bloody Mary. Quit snickering. Yes, an entire book on one drink, but it's a short book and a very popular drink, and the drink's history is widely disputed. And the book is beautiful, part of the Libretto Series from Thornwillow Press. Go google them — they're keeping alive traditions that were dead before you were born. Hand-set type, letterpress printing, hand-bound — handmade in general with everything done on site in Newburgh, N.Y., by a company whose founder started out 25 years ago binding books at his kitchen table. (Yes, they'll bind yours, and make you stationery.)

Anyway, it's a lovely book that will be here a hundred years after your Nook is in a landfill, and the text covers the history of the Bloody Mary from Paris to New York to French Lick, Ind., to George Jessel and points in between. It's on my bookshelf, along with the first *Mr. Boston* guide I've used since I got into the cocktail game. Just to make sure I was right, by the way, I checked the text and recipe for the sidecar — a nice test, I think — and found it quite literary, and tasty in the bargain. Why don't you do this for the next class? [↓](#)



Jeff Pogash (left) and his son Jonathan are not just skilled cocktail artists but accomplished authors as well.



Drink and Tell

For something a little less historical, I highly recommend Jim Meehan's new effort, *The PDT Cocktail Book*. Copiously and beautifully illustrated by Chris Gall in an industrial-age Thomas-Hart-Bentonish style, the book is named for Meehan's NY boite, PDT, putatively meaning Please Don't Tell, a faux speakeasy that you enter through a phone booth in a hot-dog stand. But don't hold that against him — the man can shake a mean drink, and his advice and recipes are the best. Plus he was Tales of the Cocktail's bartender of the year in 2009. 368 pages, Sterling Epicure books, \$24.95

Bluegrass Pere et Fils — Bargain Whiskey of the Year:

Once again, like every year, Parker Beam, and son, Scott, the distillers at Heaven Hill have released an **Evan Williams Single Barrel** whiskey. This one was put in oak in 2002 and just now bottled. Peppery, slightly astringent on the finish, full of spice and rich vanilla notes with a hint of citrus — it's a sophisticated dram, not another bottle of maple syrup. God bless the whole family. 86.6 proof, 25.95 for 750ml and cheap at twice the price.

