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MICRO INFLUENCE

"People are crazy for our mini cocktails, especially at happy hour," says global award-winning Maybe Sammy co-owner Stefano Catino of his Sydney bar's drawcard. "The minis are usually classics like the Manhattan or Negroni." Mini cocktails served on an Aalto metal rose-gold bowl from iittala.com.au

HERE'S CHEERS!

Who better to inspire your cocktail party season than the guys behind Sydney venue Maybe Sammy, voted one of the top 50 cocktail bars in the world for 2019

by **RACHEL SHARP**

photographed by **AMANDA PRIOR**

styled by **AMBER MACKAY**

FROM LEFT: Bellini, King Kong and Mezcal Negroni cocktails served on a tray, alongside a matching wine cooler (used as ice bucket) both from westelm.com.au.



A Cosmopolitan and Irish Coffee sit alongside a glass cocktail shaker from williams-sonoma.com.au and onyx coaster from westelm.com.au. CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Chic '60s-inspired wallpaper sets the scene; Maybe Sammy's creative director and head barman Andrea Gualdi; the bar's Vegas-inspired interior sports pink-velvet accents



You set the bar high when you name your new drinks establishment after the most famous party crew who ever lived, but then, Maybe Sammy owners Stefano Catino, Vince Lombardo and Andrea Gualdi are all about having a good time. “I always loved the fact that the Rat Pack were never looking at the public,” explains Catino of the informal but legendary ’60s Las Vegas entertainment crew featuring best friends Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Humphrey Bogart and Sammy Davis Jr., among others. “They were always entertaining themselves, and while they were doing that, people were having fun. We all believe that’s the main recipe for success—if you don’t have fun yourself, how can your customer enjoy the night?”

It’s a philosophy that’s worked for the Sydney-based owner trio, who are all of Italian heritage but met in Sydney. Maybe Sammy was the only Australian venue to win a spot in the prestigious World’s 50 Best Bars 2019 awards, which are presented in London and judged by more than 500 experts across 58 countries. Their gong was no mean feat, given Maybe Sammy opened in January that year.

Like its sister establishment Maybe Frank—a pizza and cocktail place Lombardo and Catino opened several years beforehand—Maybe Sammy gets its name from old Las Vegas marquee posters for Dean Martin shows that read “Dean Martin-Maybe Frank-Maybe Sammy” given the latter would often show up and perform at their friend’s shows on a whim. The Rat Pack had a blast, but Vegas reaped the benefits: visiting folks were known to sleep in their cars because the hotels were full of big-spending high rollers that the party-loving performers lured to town.

“I’ve always had an obsession with them,” admits Catino, whose father was a restaurateur in Italy. “They say the Rat Pack were womanisers, that they were trouble, but they were the biggest hit of the ’60s and really helped [combat] the racial abuse of black people, Jewish people and Italian immigrants, who still weren’t welcome [in America]. They were always making fun of [their racial differences], talking about it, making it a joke. They were cool.” Martin and Sinatra also famously refused to perform in clubs that didn’t allow African-American or Jewish members.

Maybe Sammy’s decor is another nod to retro-luxe Vegas, with plush pink-velvet banquettes, gold-hued brass chairs, marble tables and pink-and-green banana-palm wallpaper that could be straight out of a Palm Springs society party photo by Slim Aarons. All of the bar staff wear ’60s-style pale-pink dinner jackets. Even its signature cocktails—designed by group creative director Gualdi, who won 2017 Australian Bartender of The Year at the Diageo Reserve World Class competition—are served with showman flair and theatrical names.

“I don’t believe nobody [sic] who opens a bar and says ‘we don’t do it for awards’,” says Catino, in his strong Italian accent. “Fifty Best Bars was a game changer for us. We got very busy after that, but as I say to my team, we’re only as good as the last customer we served. We wanted to make a bar that’s classy but not pretentious, where we can do our tricks. Every drink has a story to tell; is an attraction. Even if there are only 10 people here, they’re gonna [sic] have a good time.”

Maybe Sammy, 115 Harrington Street, The Rocks; maybesammy.com



A Mezcal Negroni served in a crystal coupe glass from waterfordcrystal.com.au. Glass votive from iittala.com.au. Agate coaster from westelm.com.au. ABOVE: Stefano Catino and Vince Lombardo



Catino recommends using frozen grapes for Kombucha Aperol. Glass jug from williams-sonoma.com.au and marble tray from cocorepublic.com.au



ITALIAN SUMMER GIN PUNCH

Ladle into glass cups from bowl
350ml Tanqueray gin
150ml Italicus liqueur
1 litre fresh watermelon juice
300ml lemon juice
200ml strawberry syrup
200g sugar
200ml water
2 oranges, sliced

1 Combine all liquids in bowl and stir.
2 Add fruit, then allow to soak before serving.
TIP: “Italicus is made from bergamot oranges and was an aristocrat’s liqueur back in the day, like Limoncello but more delicate. The queen of Italy used to drink it, but you can buy it at Dan Murphy’s these days in a sexy bottle that looks like perfume. It’s delicious served straight with prosecco and a nice olive, too.”

The Italian Summer Gin Punch is perfect for home entertaining. Here, served in a Jeff Leatham crystal bowl, tumbler, and high-ball glass all from waterfordcrystal.com.au

THE DRINKS

BELLINI

Serve in a champagne flute or wine glass
30ml peach puree
prosecco

1 Puree ripe, fresh peaches with a little sugar and lemon juice in a blender. **2** Pour through strainer into glass. **3** Top with prosecco.

TIP: “Leave the skin on when you puree for a more full, authentic taste.”

MEZCAL NEGRONI

Serve in a “rocks” glass
30ml sweet vermouth
30ml Campari
30ml mezcal

1 Combine ingredients in shaker. **2** Pour into glass, add ice and stir. **3** Garnish with a slice of grapefruit or orange zest.

TIP: “Replacing the traditional recipe’s gin with mezcal gives the Negroni smoky notes. Mezcal is very popular right now, but we recommend you buy a good-quality one.”

KING KONG

Serve in a “rocks” glass
30ml Seedlip Orange
20ml orgeat syrup
60ml pink grapefruit
1 Kaffir lime leaf

1 Pour ingredients into shaker, top with ice and shake vigorously. **2** Serve over a large ice cube and garnish with Kaffir leaf for aroma.

COSMOPOLITAN

Serve in a martini glass
45ml Ketel One Citroen
20ml triple sec
20ml lime juice
30ml cranberry juice
10ml sugar syrup

1 Combine ingredients in shaker then fill to the top with ice. **2** Shake then strain, or double strain, into glass and serve.

TIP: “Freeze the martini glass before serving. It gives the drink a nice effect.”

IRISH COFFEE

Serve in a wine glass
30ml Redbreast 12-year-old Irish whiskey
30ml sugar mix
80ml filter coffee
60ml double cream

1 Whisk the ingredients in a cup, then pour into glass. **2** Gently layer on liquified cream.

TIP: “It’s easier if you shake the cream in a squeeze bottle so it becomes very liquid. Then it should float on top of the coffee.”

KOMBUCHA APEROL

Serve in a glass jug
125ml Aperol
125ml Cocchi Americano
25ml Becherovka
400ml kombucha
15 frozen grapes

1 Combine everything except kombucha in jug and stir. **2** Add frozen grapes as ice cubes. **3** Then top with kombucha.

TIP: “Cocchi Americano an aromatic wine. To balance the sweetness, we put a dash of Becherovka as it’s very herbal.”

LADY LUCK

Serve in a high-ball glass
15ml Curacao liqueur
15ml lemon juice
15ml passionfruit cordial
10ml maraschino
1 egg white
10ml soda

1 Combine all ingredients except soda in shake. (It should be frothy.) **2** Add ice and shake again, then pour and top with soda.

TIP: “We serve this with a passionfruit hand cream on the side. If your skin smells good when you sip, your drink is better. Make sure your cream has the same fruit as your drink.”

BONANZA

Serve in high-ball glass
20ml Bacardi white rum
30ml Rinquinquin peach wine
30ml pear nectar
15ml strawberry syrup
15ml lemon juice
2 dashes Peychaud’s Bitters
2 dashes Angostura Bitters
1 egg white
soda water

1 Pour all ingredients except soda water into shaker, then mix. **2** Add ice and shake again, then pour into glass and top with soda water.

TIP: “For vegans or anyone who doesn’t like egg white, use 20ml of water from a can of chickpeas to achieve the same frothy effect.”



MY FAVOURITE SPIRIT PICKS

Maybe Sammy’s head barman Andrea Gualdi shares his must-have labels.



GIN
“This is the next step up from standard Tanqueray, if you’re wanting something very special.”
Tanqueray No. Ten, \$92; at bws.com.au

VODKA
“A crisp, clean vodka that’s perfect for martini-style cocktails as well as sweeter tropical ones.”
Ketel One vodka, \$54; at firstchoiceliqur.com.au



TEQUILA
“This is my favourite for cocktails; it’s like a marriage between tequila and whiskey. Light, slightly bitter.”
Calle 23 blanco tequila, \$75; at danmurphys.com.au

RUM
“Bacardi is a good price and quality to use at home, but for something next level, I’d go Plantation.”
Plantation 3 Stars white rum, \$60; at nicks.com.au



Lady Luck and Bonanza cocktails. Cocktail shaker from westelm.com.au