



COCKTAILS

SECRET SALOONS

A century after Prohibition was enacted,
the speakeasy lives on

BY KENDALL UPTON

WHEN PROHIBITION WENT INTO EFFECT IN 1920, Seattle became a kind of “smuggler’s paradise,” according to HistoryLink. Teeming with waterways and situated near the Canadian border, our fair port city was a perfect breeding ground for successful bootlegging operations and speakeasies, those illicit, hidden bars that skirted the ban on alcohol. A resurgence of speakeasy-style bars began in Seattle a decade ago, proving that this is a city deeply dedicated to its rum-running past.

SMITH TOWER OBSERVATORY AND BAR

Completed six years before Prohibition was enacted, Smith Tower played a minor role in Seattle’s Prohibition-era escapades. Roy Olmstead, Seattle’s infamous bootlegging king and a former lieutenant in the Seattle Police Department, ran a radio broadcasting station (with the call letters KFQX, later changed to KOMO) from his home. The station included an infrequently used remote studio at Smith Tower, through which secret messages were alleged to have been transmitted to Olmstead’s bootlegging network.

Now, the top of Smith Tower houses an elegant bar with stellar city views and the option of enhancing your drink with in-house barrel-aged liquors.

For \$99, you can get a Rum Runner’s card, which grants you unlimited access to the observatory and bar (without it, one-time admission costs \$12–\$22), one free guest per visit, and 20% off all gifts, food and drinks for a year.

OUR PICK If it’s on the rotating menu, try the effervescent Such Great Heights (\$15), made with Pelotón de la Muerte mezcal, orange juice, white port, orange spice shrub and cardamom bitters for a flavor combination of smoke and citrus. *Pioneer Square; smithtower.com*

KNEE HIGH STOCKING CO.

To pass through the unassuming facade of this Capitol Hill bar, you must ring a bell at the front door, hidden in plain sight.

Inside, you’ll find a generous seasonal craft cocktail selection alongside a menu of Filipino-American comfort food dishes, such as fresh lumpia (six for \$10) or a pork

tocino sandwich topped with pickled slaw, jalapeño and Kewpie mayo (\$16), making the bar a unique addition to the canon of Seattle speakeasies. Reservations are encouraged and must be made via text message (206.979.7049).

OUR PICK Try the Black Velvet Manhattan (\$15) for an earthy take on a classic drink, thanks to Averna amaro and Falerum together with Sazerac brand rye. *Capitol Hill; kneehighstocking.com*

NEEDLE & THREAD, (INSIDE TAVERN LAW)

Inside the speakeasy-themed cocktail bar Tavern Law hides Needle & Thread, a reservation-only second-story bar that carries the concept even further: Patrons use a rotary phone to gain access through a bank vault door. There’s no drink menu, but bartenders will concoct a cocktail based on your tastes—no two creations are exactly alike.

OUR PICK Your choice! After telling the bartender my preferred liquors and flavor profiles, I was served a delicious green herbal cocktail made with gin, sage liqueur, Salers aperitif, bianco vermouth and muddled basil.

Capitol Hill; tavernlaw.com

BATHTUB GIN & CO.

located in an alley between First and Second avenues, just north of Blanchard Street, and hidden behind an unmarked door in what was formerly a hotel boiler room, this Belltown bar honors the illicit alcohol made in bathtubs during Prohibition. The intimate and studiously decorated space makes you feel as though you ought to be writing a novel; the menu offers a large selection of fine gins and specialty gin cocktails. No reservations are allowed here.

OUR PICK The Atticus Finch (\$12), made with gin, red vermouth, grapefruit juice, Licor 43 and black walnut bitters, delivers a citrus punch on contact that melts into brown-sugary warmth.
Belltown; bathtubginseattle.com

DEEP DIVE

Underneath the Amazon Spheres lies Deep Dive, an opulent speakeasy with the atmosphere of a cabinet of curiosities. Opened in the summer of 2018 by chef Renee Erickson's team, this bar leans into decadence with a food menu featuring the likes of upscale Seattle hot dogs with cream cheese, pickled jalapeños and onions, and topped with salmon caviar (\$18); and smoked oyster tartines with chive aioli, pickled ramps and fennel salad (\$8). The 30-seat bar fills up fast, so get there early; a limited number of reservations are available on weekends.

OUR PICK The delicate strawberry-infused aquavit in the Mixtape (\$18) is mixed with ancho chile and then given an egg white pillow top and cardamom dusting, creating a well-balanced spicy-sweet drink that doesn't overpower your palate.
Belltown; deepdiveseattle.com **S**



FREE SPIRIT
The Atticus Finch from Bathtub Gin & Co. pairs gin with citrus and bitters, among other flavors

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