

# FOOD ARTS

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## Mixed Advice

In the continuing evolution of bartending, drinks professionals are marketing their skills to their peers.

**Jeffery Lindenmuth reports.**

Walk into The Home Depot and you'll find the old Do It Yourself acronym, DIY, has a new full-service companion: DIFY—Do It For You. Likewise, restaurateurs, hotel and cruise ship f&b managers, and event planners looking for cocktail advice may want to consider a top mixologist to demolish, design, and construct a cocktail program to spec, whether it involves one drink or a global overhaul. And, like any contractor, these hired guns come with a variety of opinions, experience, abilities, and fees (prices range from hundreds of dollars for a single signature drink to tens of thousands for a complete program with staff training), as they define the new profession of the cocktail consultant.

Ryan Magarian, founder and president of Seattle-based [Liquid Relations](#), has created cocktails for spirits brands like Hennessy as well as instituted cocktail programs for [Sofitel](#) and [McCormick & Schmick's](#) seafood restaurants and launched seven restaurants, nightclubs, and lounges with SBE Entertainment Group. Magarian is known for his database of perfectly balanced cocktails and his knack with savory drinks, but he says that recipes are secondary to training for him. "In the first hour, I present the training as a gift. I'm not there to change the way they bartend, but the way they mix drinks," states Magarian. "When I'm through, the staff know they could work in the finest cocktail bars in the country, but what's amazing is the turnover is almost zero. We give the team a gift and in return we get thanks and dedication."

SBE also gets great drinks and impressive sales. Following its launch by Magarian, the cocktail program at Katsuya in Los Angeles sold more than 27,000 signature drinks in its first four months. With such success, Magarian believes that equity partnership is the future for him and others in the cocktail consulting business. "Honestly, the market doesn't bear up-front the value of what I am worth. I'm really looking for equity. I bring recipes, training, press, and sales," he says. Magarian explains that creating new cocktails for each property is secondary to packaging the program, whether it's McCormick & Schmick's list of 40 chronological

drinks representing a timeline of cocktails, or the dichotomic "His & Hers" list developed for Sofitel.

Among the clients of his New York City–based [Creative Cocktail Consultants Corp.](#), Brian Van Flandern counts *The World Ship*, the itinerant floating luxury residence, and is known for ably handling wine as well as cocktails. "There are three things I offer that are most popular: I am a Michelin three-star bartender, so I can teach beverage service that most of my contemporaries can't. Thanks to Per Se, I have a tremendous wine knowledge. I can also teach consistently well-balanced cocktails, and I can teach this to anyone in a half hour. And, I offer a complete spirits education that gives backstories and assists in up-selling," boasts Van Flandern.

Known for creating well-balanced and food-friendly cocktails, without overt alcohol, Van Flandern always includes the chef in his education, noting "the bar should be seen as an extension of the kitchen." And while Van Flandern seeks long-term partnerships, he also educates and empowers the staff to take control of their own program.

Michael Martensen, mixologist at [The Bar](#) at the [Rosewood Mansion on Turtle Creek](#) in Dallas, benefited from Van Flandern's four-day spirits introduction program, followed by hands-on mixing. "I could make cocktails before, but I could not do what I am doing now. He really taught me how to get in the kitchen and not be afraid," says Martensen. Five months later, only one of Van Flandern's cocktails remained, and Martensen has been dubbed a Dallas cocktail luminary, building his own line up of drinks such as Havana Nights—Perique tobacco-infused Mount Gay rum with lemon juice, orange juice, sweet vermouth, and Peychaud's bitters, stirred and served on the rocks. "It tastes like smoking a cigar, with raisin, caramel, and black pepper flavors."

Even in a small pool of world-class mixologists, synergies exist, and several of the most dynamic consultants are partnerships. Take, for example, the recent union of Paul Tanguay, formerly of [Sushi Samba](#), and Tad Carducci, formerly of [Pluckemin Inn](#) in New Jersey, as [Tippling Bros.](#) "We're a stronger team because we can touch on many aspects. At Apothecary in Philadelphia, we did the cocktails, the wine, and the beer list. We offer the whole package," says Tanguay, who also brings expertise in sake and *shochu*.

The Tippling Bros., like their peers, dabble in the lucrative marketing of spirits brands, but, Carducci says, "we gravitate toward the restaurant side. It's in our blood to want to make people happy." For the future, the duo

anticipate doing more work in the public sector, as a nation of cocktail consumers create a demand for classes, workshops, and dinners geared toward home entertaining.

Like others in this nascent profession, the Tippling Bros. say setting a fee is a challenge. "It's such a new profession there is no benchmark, no tradition," points out Carducci. After trying models based on flat fees and retainers, they came back to the time-tested hourly rate—determining day rates for bar design, opening, and long-term services. Their advice for those shopping for advice: know your concept and know your budget.

Bruno Pouget, Philadelphia restaurateur and partner at [Apothecary](#), says Tippling Bros. was the "missing link" that fulfilled his vision of a stylish reinvention of the European pharmacy, casting Apothecary as a "cocktail lab" that serves healthful and fresh cocktails. "I'm financing all my own projects and always on a budget, but this was a necessity. After spending so much money on the right design and right equipment, you also need to invest in the right people and product," says Pouget. In addition to 10 days of staff training and recipe development, Tippling Bros. was contracted for six months of monthly meetings and monitoring of the program. The 20 signature cocktails account for about 65 percent of sales at Apothecary. "My business is concept design and operation. I'm not a trained bartender so this is not something I could have done on my own," Pouget attests, noting that the "Tipplers" will have a role in Noble, his new restaurant project on Rittenhouse Square.

Some mixologists prefer to be fully embedded, like Jonathan Pogash, who creates drinks for [Hospitality Holdings](#), the group behind New York City's The Campbell Apartment and The World Bar in Trump World Tower. Pogash also created the drinks list for [T Salon](#) in Chelsea and works for spirits brands, but he actually slings drinks for his main client. "It's an intimate relationship because I'm behind the bar a few nights a week for them," says Pogash. "I feel, as a consultant, you still need to get behind the bar to lend credibility. People like to see the mixologist and know they can find you."

Obviously, Pogash favors long-term relationships, and he points out that this philosophy benefits both him and the client. "You don't want to just launch a list and then find the cocktails are not being made the right way," he explains. "The client may get what they paid for, but when you lend your name to a list, reputations are on the line."

Dalio Calado, of [Classical Cocktails](#), agrees that time behind the bar is paramount and can be seen serving his brand of drinks, defined by global ingredients that reflect his experience in Brazil, Africa, and the Caribbean, at spirits company and entertainment events. "I don't look at myself as a consultant. I'm a bar chef who knows how to help other people," says Calado. His services include staff training, cocktail creation, and special event cocktail management, including supplying staff. Drinks created for Ketel One vodka, Christiana vodka, St. Germain Elderflower Liqueur, and others have been introduced by Calado in national accounts like [Bubba Gump Shrimp Company](#). "I'm really focused in developing recipes, and I keep my recipes simple to make," says Calado. "Because I still work behind the bar, I have a clear notion of what's going on. It's not difficult to produce high quality at a fast pace."