

THE DIZZY FIZZ

NYC, ONE SIP AT A TIME



Bottlerocker of the Week: Maxwell Britten



Maxwell Britten, recently named a 2009 Star Chefs Rising Stars mixologist

"If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth."—*Holden Caulfield, "The Catcher in the Rye"*

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I recently sat down at Freemans, and Maxwell Britten, a 2009 Star Chefs Rising Stars-winning mixologist, was behind the stick. Unlike Holden Caulfield, Maxwell, a creative writing student who has lived in NYC since 2005, certainly has not had a lousy childhood. Growing up with a passionate epicurean and food & beverage professional for a father (Eric S. Britten), Maxwell has been surrounded by food and spirits since he was old enough to handle a fork and a knife.

Despite what sounds like silver spoon-fed beginnings, he started out as a busboy at Jack the Horse Tavern in Brooklyn Heights in 2006 and pulled through the ranks to become head bartender and beverage director within a year—all while finally turning of legal drinking age. Craft bartending became Maxwell's passion when a copy of *"The Gentlemen's Companion, V.1 & 2 Around the World with a Fork, Knife and Spoon; Around the World with a Jigger, Beaker, and Flask"* by Charles H. Baker Jr., was handed to him by St. John Frizzell (now owner of Fort Defiance in Red Hook) in the fall of 2007. Maxwell also studied with Damon Dyer of Flatiron Lounge, took the BarSmarts course, and has twice been a cocktail apprentice at Tales of the Cocktail—so he's more than done his homework. Now running a food and drink consulting firm, Jigger, Beaker & Flask, with his older brother, Jeremy Osslund, Maxwell is a notable bottlerocker in NYC's cocktailian scene, but he's not letting it go to his head, he says.

"The Dizzy Dozen: The Same 12 Questions We Always Ask" With Maxwell Britten

Q: What is the first thing you drink after you wake up?

A: A big, HUGE cup of nice cold water, occasionally (depends on what I was up to before bedtime), or a Coke over hand cracked ice with a lime wedge. Or an iced Americano from the coffee shop around the corner of my apartment, Glass Shop, shout out to Francesco!

Q: What is the first thing you drink after a hard day's work?

A: An ice cold brewsky. I might have a nip of Rittenhouse depending on how hard my night was.

Q: What is the most delicious ingredient in your liquor cabinet?

A: Probably the Lasanta by Glenmorangie. I recently finished a bottle of the Cuvée Homère by Rhum Clément with some world-class scumbags (bartenders) just before moving into my new apartment. I think I have a Budweiser or Brooklyn Lager in the fridge, those are pretty delicious too.

Dizzy Recap: Yerba Buena Perry Opening

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Talk Drinks

Q: If you could sit at the bar between any two people (alive or deceased), who would they be?

A: Charles H. Baker Jr., and my Dad.

Q: Three favorite NYC bars:

- Prime Meats: Styled after a German beer hall, excellent beers on draught, good bartenders, great eats, and the kitchen stays open until 2 a.m., which is a rarity in Brooklyn.
- Fort Defiance: Counter-culture coffee, St. John Frizell, great bites, in the heart of Red Hook, great menu—just a classic, check it out!
- Milk & Honey: Too easy, right?

Q: Three favorite non-alcoholic hangouts:

- Prospect Park at sunset
- The Met
- Fairway in Red Hook. I swear I don't live in Red Hook—there is just some great stuff down there.

Q: Average night's sleep:

A: Lately, 6 1/2-7 hours, and I have been in bed before 2 a.m. most nights these days.

Q: What is your favorite place to shop for your bar?

A: It was once Lenelle's (in Red Hook!), which is no longer open. Astor Wines is pretty good. Sometimes doing a gig is good shopping—then again, I can't remember the last time I actually had to buy the booze myself.

Q: Where do you find inspiration?

A: The kitchen, text books, bar manuals, characters in novels, movies, music, fashion, food, and most importantly, the ass-kicking bartenders you can find around the world these days.

Q: If you woke up on a desert island, what bottle would you hope to have wash ashore?

A: A gallon of chilled water. If you were hoping for a bottle of booze, then I guess I would hope for some rum, maybe Appleton VX? Jamaican rum calls for the occasion, and it's just really easy on the palate. If there is no ice and I am on a desert island, I might not want to be sippin' on warm/hot hooch.

The Cocktail Guru

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Orangette

Q: Do you have any bar-related good luck charms?

A: No, but from time to time I might put a dash of aromatic bitters behind the ears when I am feeling like I want to impress the ladies. Some barkeeps I know say it's good luck in competitions, I just like the way it makes me smell. It's almost like really great-smelling cologne. People will be like, "You smell magnificent," and I'll say, "Thanks, just a little limited-edition Repeal Day Bitters by The Bitter Truth, no biggie."

Q: Do you have a nickname for yourself when you've had too many?

A: Yeah, it's "French Exit"—that's when you peace out without saying anything to anyone you're with and in some occasions, not paying your bill—I swear the only person I do that to is Jason Littrell [of The Randolph] and that's because he is the mad man behind the most debaucherous bar in Manhattan. Sometimes it's safer just to leave before he tries to give you another pickle back. In a conversation with him last week about my most recent "French Exit," I go, "I am sorry man, I REALLY needed to go home, I could barely talk." He says, "Well, you could still drink, so that's not good enough for me."



Maxwell Britten's "Zorrito Dorrado (The Golden Fox)" with Elegal Mexcal Reposado, Yellow Chartreuse, and orange marmalade.

The Barstool Romantic

The Impossible Cool

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1

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