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Tales of the Cocktail Part Two: Louisiana Nights

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By [Amanda Schuster](#)



Fred Schneider and Lynnette Marrero at Battle of the Sexes

And now it's time for [Tales of the Cocktail](#) to get some much needed shut eye to rest up for another year! Here are all the bits we couldn't fit into [Part One](#). Think of this as the TOTC b-side compilation.

Vodka might be "re-emerging," but gin is still in

[Gin and Tonic is Only the Beginning](#) provided gin brands a chance to get crafty with everyone's favorite highball.

Why do a gin and tonic tasting? Put gin in a glass, add ice, tonic, maybe a squeeze of lime, and you're done, right? But with so many new gins on the market produced all over the world, tasting them side by side in this setting proved to be an excellent way to distinguish their nuances and suss out the components. Some brands included additional ingredients with their cocktails, such as herbs, bitters or even licorice, to highlight the different botanical elements in their gins. Others chose to



Citadelle Gin and its botanicals at Gin and Tonic is Only the Beginning

simply let the gin flavors speak for themselves. Tonic matters too. Sickly sweet quinine has been all but swept away in favor of craft tonics with drier flavors. [Fever Tree](#) found its way in many combinations, and they also previewed their new, delicious Elderflower Tonic, which I can't wait to sip more frequently, even, (gasp!), without gin in it! If one wants more control over tonic flavors, there's [Tomr's Tonic Syrup](#), to which you just add soda to dilute as you please. Great stuff, from [Citadelle Gin](#) (who also brought their [Ferrand](#) Cognac barrel-aged Reserve), [Brooklyn Gin](#), 86 Company [Ford's Gin](#), [Hayman's Old Tom](#), [Victoria Gin](#), [Greenhook Ginsmith](#), [Bluecoat Gin](#), [Rives Gin](#) and [Edinburgh Gin](#).

Spirited Dinner



Potato Souffle at the Willett Bourbon Spirited dinner

One of my favorite nights of TOTC is Spirited Dinner Thursday, which take place at various restaurants and venues around the city. Spirit brands and portfolios team up with bartenders to create multi-course tasting menus with cocktail pairings. I was particularly jonesed to attend the one held at [Arnaud's](#), hosted by [Willett Bourbon](#). I loved the idea of finally dining at one of New Orleans's pinnacle institutions, especially with a whiskey that's a staple in my house and ordered regularly when out, and the chance to finally meet its 3rd generation successor, Drew Kolsveen.

Sadly, although the classic local cuisine was excellent, the pairings were not. I was already apprehensive when I made the reservation that instead of 3 or 4 courses that are set to pair specifically with cocktails, diners had a prix fixe choice in each course, but with only one cocktail that could correspond with it. All the cocktails are ones I like to drink, such as [Seelbachs](#), mint juleps, bourbon port punches and things dark and stirry, and I had unwavering faith in them. How could this possibly be bad? However, put into practice, the drinks simply didn't work, and in many cases were unbalanced or too overpowering for the food. I was having a lovely time with my dining companions, all complete strangers who took comfort



The scene at Juniperlooza

in each other, but noticed that many drinks went undrunk (wow, did this mean we actually liked one another then?) Someone at our table even wanted to give up and order wine, and Kolsveen was also a no show. Though Willett Marketing Director Hunter Chavanne graciously took time to visit each participating table, he was hard to flag down, and we felt adrift when we had questions or wanted to taste the bourbons neat, which we were unable to do. The latter might have been a more appropriate match for the food. Something must have gone wrong.



Angostura Cocktail Challenge winner Yani Frye of Detroit's The Sugar House

Party all the time

Another unfortunate downside to the TOTC experience were the lines to get into late night soirees and pool parties. In some cases, it was downright impossible and people would give up, despite the fact these events supposedly had an RSVP list and some were even ticketed. Instead of privileged media, it could make a gal feel like a charmless schlub on the wrong side of the velvet rope!

However, there were some worth waiting for, such as the extravagant [William Grant & Sons](#) tribute to cocktails in film, the über creative [Absolut Vodka](#) Welcome Reception (discussed in more detail in our [Part One](#)), the [Angostura Cocktail Challenge](#) and Juniperlooza, a celebration of all things gin-tastic with music. Our own Adam Levy also had a swell time attending

the [Diageo](#) USS World Class cocktail hour, which showcased the winning cocktails from the finalists from the [World Class Competitions](#), and their bartender mentors.

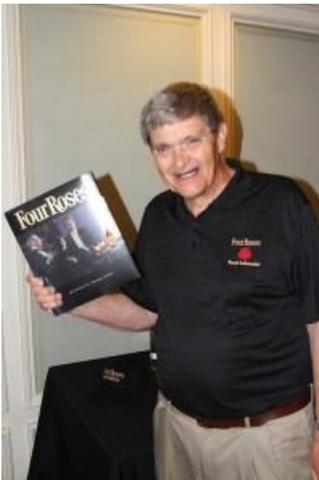
Tasting... One, Two, Three, Four....

Of course, we'd be remiss in not mentioning all the wonderful spirits and cocktails that can be sampled throughout the course of any day at TOTC. Perhaps the story is best told in pictures.

Here's Jimmy DiResta building a bar at a demo at the [George Dickel Whiskey](#) event at House of Blues.



Al Young from Four Roses Bourbon.



Brian Facquet from [Bootlegger 21 New York Vodka](#).



Louisiana's own [Bayou Rum!](#)



[86 Company's](#) Dushan Zanic gets cozy as Jason Kosmos pours G & T's in the background.



[Nikka](#) whiskys lined up at the [Anchor Distilling](#) event.



James Menite enjoying Pamela Wiznitzer's shaker face at the [Lucid Absinthe](#) tasting.



Punch anyone? At the [Pernod Ricard](#) Pool Party at the Hotel Monteleone.



[Pallini Limoncello](#) pops at the Monteleone Snack Stand.



And finally, yours truly with my dear friend Jessica Tantillo Barnard of [Twin Liquors](#) in Austin, TX at the Pernod Pool Party.



Many thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Cocktail, Ann and Paul Tuennerman, for another smashing Tales of the Cocktail! Until next year, gird your livers, folks!