



MEET YOUR MIXOLOGIST

Take a dip in inviting waves of Waterbar

Bartender at trendy spot talks about boating, skateboarding and the eel's nocturnal nature. » [Page 10](#)



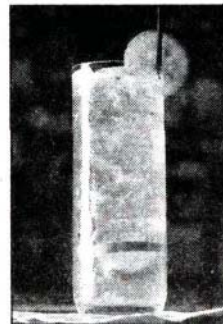
ABOUT THE SERIES

In a saloon town such as San Francisco, the bartender plays a crucial role. Confessor, friend, sounding board — the man or woman behind the plank sees to it that our needs are met with elegance, grace and often wit. They see humanity at its best and most convivial, but also offer a nod and a welcome to the lonely. But what do they see when they look at us? What are the tricks of their trade? And what lessons have they learned along the way? In this Examiner weekly feature, we talk to some of our local bartenders to find out.

FEATURED RECIPE

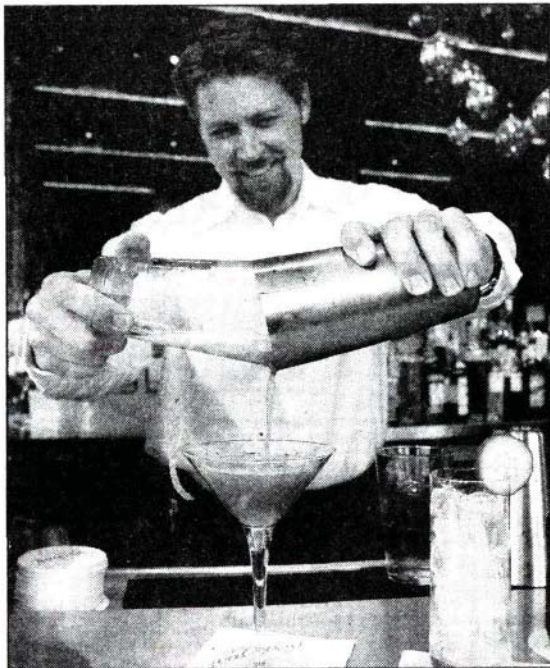
LAWN PARTY

- » 1 thick cut of cucumber
 - » 1 tbsp. ginger
 - » 1 shot of Hangar
 - » 1 Buddha's Hand Lemon Vodka
 - » 1 shot of Pimms
 - » 1 shot of ginger beer
- Muddle together cucumber and ginger in a Collins glass. Add vodka, Pimms and ginger beer. Shake vigorously and pour over rocks into said Collins. Garnish with a slice of cucumber.



Meet your mixologist

Waterbar With his waxed moustache and arts background, bartender Joe Wrye is like the Salvador Dali of mixology, with liquid creations that made us feel surreal. We also admired his bartending ethics, which are rather simple: Nail down the basics and build from there. "Not to get basics right is a sin," he says. An old-school bartender at heart, Wrye says if he could wear garters on his arms, he would. He also has an ambitious agenda to turn the newly born Waterbar into one of the best bars in The City. From what we tasted, he's got a good shot. In fact, we hope he didn't take it the wrong way when we compared his Pink Sands with a Jell-O shot. It was meant to be a very high compliment. Meanwhile, we pictured ourselves spa-bound when he dazzled with his Lawn Party concoction. 399 The Embarcadero, S.F.; (415) 284-9922; www.waterbarsf.com



Joe Wrye says he knows what time it is when the eel in the bar's aquarium gets active. — Bret Putnam/Special to The Examiner

Where are you from? I grew up in Boston, where so many drinks originated and where Cheers is, which made me want to be a bartender. I wanted to be Sam Malone without all the womanizing.

If you could serve a drink to anyone, who would it be? I would serve a Dark and Stormy to Ernest Hemingway or Herb Caen. I used to do a lot of sailing as a kid ... which is where I nurtured my love of rum, which is what led to a Dark and Stormy, a classic seaman's drink. Hopefully, customers won't just catch me gawking at the Bay. My dream is to be living by the ballpark in a houseboat and just come over here on my skateboard.

Where's your favorite place to skateboard? My favorite place is illegal. Golden Gate Park for a longboard guy. JFK Drive, from the Conservatory of Flowers all the way to the ocean, is nice. Two or three kicks, and you're at the other end of the park.

So how did you get into this business? I put myself through art school bartending. I'm your classic artist-bartender.

Where did you go to art school? I went to a little liberal-arts college in Lynchburg, Va., and took master arts classes in Boston.

Since you are an artist, if you could have your work hang anywhere in the world, where would it be? It has to be one?

OK, you can have three. The Guggenheim, the SFMoMA, and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

You have an interesting moustache. I've had some version of this for 12 years. It started after college when I stopped shaving and my mother was giving me a "what for?" for it. Then I saw a Netflix DVD on Salvador Dali and thought to myself, why not?

Have you swam in the Bay yet? I can't say that I have.

And the fish in those gigantic tanks, do you think they know what's going on around here? Yeah. They all get going around here at 10 p.m. There's a 7-foot wolf eel, and when he starts moving, swimming wildly around, I check my watch and it's 10 p.m. At lunch, they are very docile.

Who feeds them? The Monterey Bay Aquarium. — Tiffany Martini