

2009 CONCEPTS OF TOMORROW CONFERENCE



COOL, CREATIVE: Camber Lay (left) showed the COT crowd how to put a signature spin on drink selections.

Shake It Up: Tips from the Top

Mixologist **Camber Lay** clearly does not take drinks lightly. Lay, the talent behind the remarkable bar menu at Quiver Bar at San Francisco's Epic Roadhouse, has put her own spin on classic cocktails, creating drinks that provide a perfect foil for Epic's menu and concocting liqueurs, infusions and other mixes to obtain just the right result. Her artistry has paid off: The *San Francisco Chronicle* named her a Rising Star Mixologist, and **RESTAURANT HOSPITALITY** profiled her as a Master Mixologist.



Lay and fellow bartender **Scott Brody** whipped up some favorite concoctions and described the Quiver Bar philosophy for the Concepts of Tomorrow audience.

Lay's basic strategy has been to take a classic cocktail recipe and make it appealing to the modern palate. In some cases there is no choice but to adapt, since the original ingredient is no longer available or has been refor-

mulated to alter its taste profile. She likes to experiment; her philosophy is to "be true to the liquor and have fun at the same time." And Lay said it's better to excel with a manageable number of choices instead of doing it all. "You don't need 20 cocktails on your list," she said.

Brody pointed out that tipplers tend to fall into one of two camps: under 30 and over 30. Under-30 guests "just want to go out and get drunk," he observed. They prefer sweet drinks that disguise the alcohol taste. Their older counterparts, on the other hand, want to savor the liquor and are drawn to the classics.

As with food choices, patrons are likely to remember and order more drinks that are at the top or bottom of the menu. So it's important to make them memorable, Lay observed.

Quiver Bar follows some basic good practices:

- "All ice makes a difference, and it's often overlooked," Lay said. Frequent ice machine filter changes are essential.
- Measuring is important to ensure consistency. "We jigger every drink every time," Brody said.

- Sugar, sea salt and fresh herbs are standard.

For operators looking to revitalize their bar menu, Brody suggested laying down a gauntlet for the bar staff. Give them a classic bar guide and challenge them to create a signature drink. "Most bartenders have an ego and will rise to the challenge," he said.

