



Jessica Weinstein

Head Bartender, Hank's Cocktail Bar

Jessica Weinstein is a seasoned bartender and restaurant manager with years of experience working in the Washington, DC hospitality community. Her easy going nature, cool-girl vibe, whimsical creations and flavor-based cocktail repertoire have made her one of the region's most popular bartenders. Now, playing the lead role at Hank's Cocktail Bar in DC's vibrant Petworth neighborhood, Jess is buzzing up the new hotspot. As goddess of the glass, Jess' skillful handiwork and expertise lures locals, visitors and notable movers & shakers alike to sidle up to the bar and experience a range of technique-driven classics and avant-garde newcomers.

Food and drink has always been an integral part of Jess Weinstein. "It's very much a family affair," she says of her lineage. "My father's side has always been involved in the industry, immigrating to the US from Russia and eventually operating a DGS grocery store in DC. My grandfather went to work for Giant Food and my brother is a GM at a restaurant in the city." Following in her family's footsteps, she went on to study at Montgomery College, delving into psychology, art and food & beverage. Of her coursework, it was the latter that led to her first job with the Black Restaurant Group. During her time there, she was fully immersed in the hospitality realm, spearheading new staff training while also bartending, running the floor and managing special events.

In 2015, Jess joined the Hank's family, formally known as JL Restaurant Group [owned by esteemed restaurateur chef Jamie Leeds]. In that time, she has risen to become one of its most recognized spirit stars. Whether it's inventing new drinks, updating classics, creating menus or curating staff, Jess' influence behind and in front of the bar cannot be missed. Her signature style – drams based in vibrant, strong flavors – has been culled from years of experience working in kitchens alongside top toques like Danny Wells and Thierry Delourneaux. "Many of my greatest role models are chefs," Jess says. "They've taught me flavor detail and personality through their dishes, and I aspire to do the same thing through my drinks." It was through that experience that she began to experiment with culinary ingredients in cocktail applications like cucumber bitters, saffron infusions, black garlic Armagnac, scallion oils, charred eggplant tinctures and tangy Greek yogurt bases. She is also greatly influenced by her travels, which have led her to places from Oaxaca, where she visited with *mezcaleros* [mezcal makers], to New Orleans, the epicenter of cocktail culture.

"I love that my job is ever-changing but at the root, it's all about the interaction," says Jess, who began her restaurant / bar career in 2011. "Bartending has such a different mix of rewards and challenges that require a unique set of skills. No hour is ever the same; we get to be a part of people's lives each day when that person sits down in front of you at the bar. There's something renewing and exciting about getting to be a part of that every night. I always know why I'm behind that bar, and that is for the person in front of it."

Jess is most fond of gin, which is the base of many of her greatest creations, such as the “I’m Sorry Miss Gibson” with Plymouth Gin, Lilet Blanc and Pickled Pea. “As a spirit, there is a huge spectrum of expressions. These variations allow gin to play well in many different cocktails,” says Jess, who also added a Spanish Style Gin & Tonic Bar [rotating gins, tonic, herbs] to celebrate the summer season. But she doesn’t discriminate – light, refreshing Southside cocktails also tickle-her-fancy, in addition to more classic styles. “I’ll never turn down a Manhattan!” she says.

Now, as an ambassador for DC's most talked about hotspot, Hank’s Cocktail Bar, Jess is putting her years of practice into play, helping to create an energy and mystique unique to the gathering spot. “We will always be playful and seasonal,” Jess says. “Expect to see an ever-evolving menu as we collaborate to put up fresh drinks and highlight unique variations on our iconic classics. The team at Hank’s Cocktail Bar is absolutely phenomenal. Game on!”

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