

Meet your Neighbor

RYAN MAGARIAN

Written by resident Eleni Kehagiaras



"When you apply the same joy, passion and principles of freshness, precision, and seasonality to making your drinks, in the very same way that a chef does his or her solid creations, the result will no longer be valued in the simple delivery of alcohol, but in the creation of truly memorable and occasionally life changing 'liquid' culinary experiences."

For Ryan Magarian mixing drinks is extremely contextual, and he believes all cocktails can be enjoyed not only on their own, but can be food friendly with their components carefully aligned to harmonize with the flavors and textures of a dish. But where did these philosophies and award winning drink creations come from?

After what he calls a relatively uneventful youth growing up in the western suburbs of Portland Oregon, Ryan, a self-admitted late bloomer both emotionally and physically, would eventually earn an undergrad degree in political science from U of O and end up falling into the world of bars and spirits. "If I'm completely honest, I would tell you that I started bartending in 1996 for three rather, well, ignoble reasons: to meet women, to put myself in close proximity to free booze, and, of course, nurse a deep need for attention. I couldn't have dreamed up a gig better suited for such hedonistic ambitions than that as a Club Med barman." Obvious environmental and lifestyle situations ensued and you can imagine what the next few years for Ryan were like. He says he definitely got was he was looking for at Club Med right up to the point where he says he just couldn't look himself in the mirror anymore, "after a year of that lifestyle, I decid-

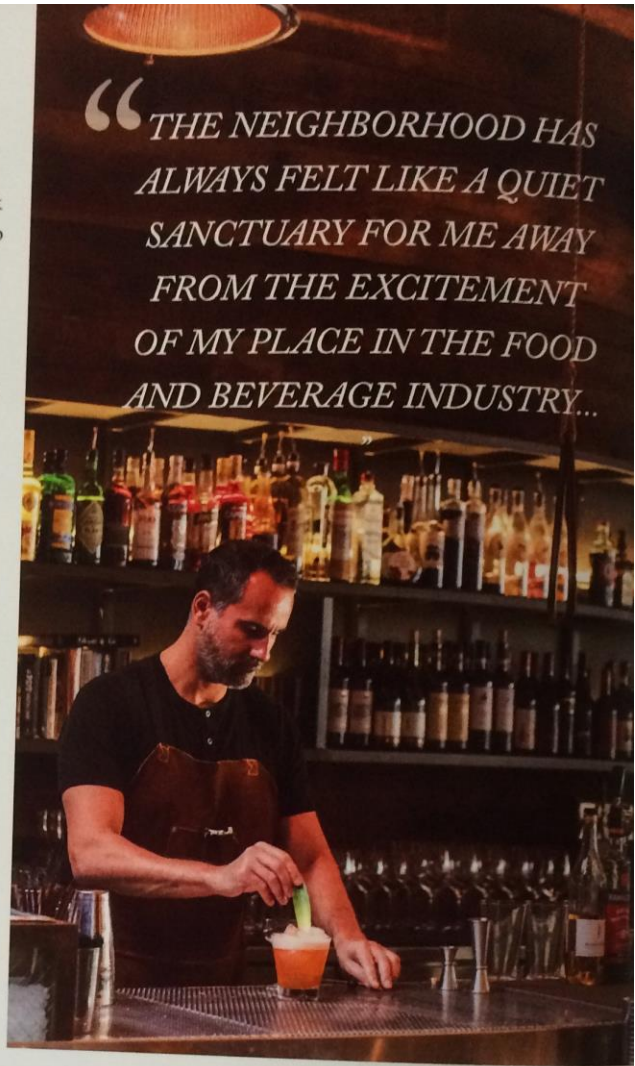
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ed I just couldn't do it anymore, so I bandaged up my wounded liver, tied my greasy long hair back into a ponytail, and headed back home to Portland, OR with a smile on my face and honestly, a deep appreciation for what it meant to be a bartender."

Soon after Ryan met up with world-renowned culinary consultant Kathy Casey which would take him to Seattle from 2000 to 2006 where he further developed his love and ability to mix a signature style of cocktails influenced by the flavors and techniques of the kitchen. "My acumen for mixing drinks is definitely something I feel I've been gifted with and when it comes to coming up with new cocktails, it has never really felt extraordinarily challenging, but rather fun and rewarding. But to be specific about the process, I usually begin the development of a new drink with a classic cocktail template and then evolve the components within them to give them the spin I'm looking for. Inspiration comes to me from so many places, but specifically with regards to flavors, I find that salads and culinary preparations in general have probably given me the most inspiration."

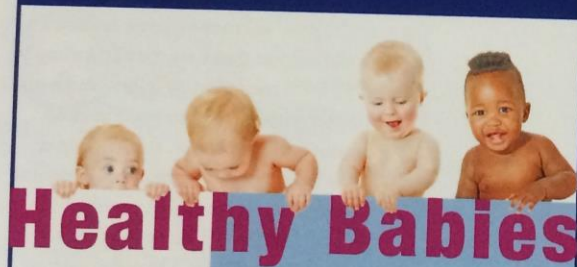
Magarian would eventually return to Portland (or Ptown as he affectionately refers to it) to co-found Aviation Gin with House

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Spirits Distillery, a spirit brand believed to be the first bartender/distiller partnership in US History. More recently, he opened Oven and Shaker with six-time James Beard nominee Cathy Whims and restaurateur Kurt Huffman, "after many years of consulting on the development of bars and restaurants for others, I felt it was super important both personally and professionally to put my money where my mouth was so to speak and take the great plunge. And I am happy to say, that in a highly competitive industry, and an even more competitive food city, we seem to have found a winning formula."

There is however a lot more to this bartender-cum-entrepreneur than might be expected. Ryan is an avid runner, reader, and passionate lover of family, and friends, "I particularly enjoy the fact that I have fast access to some of the best and most accessible trail running in the world...trail runs in Forest Park have been some of the most peaceful and introspective moments of my life." Ryan further enjoys traveling and spending time in new environments, hiking, skiing, diving, and, of course, enjoying the spectacular food and bev-



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By Eleni Kebagiaras
 (Eleni is an 8-year Forest Heights resident, former Sunset High School classmate of Ryan and total fan of his beautifully botanical Aviation Gin. Read more about Eleni in the 2014 December issue of FHL Magazine)

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erage options of our fair burg. That being said what would prompt a single 41-year-old to live in a family oriented neighborhood outside the hustle and bustle of downtown Portland? The proximity to his parent's home (just by Mill Pond) and downtown Portland, not to mention its ultra-tranquil environs led him to put down roots in Forest Heights, specifically, "the neighborhood has always felt like a quiet sanctuary for me away from the excitement of my place in the food and beverage industry and I think it's an important piece in my constant pursuit of life balance." And speaking of balance, finding it in an industry as ruthless and demanding as the bar and restaurant world, Ryan says "my faith and with that my family and friends and amazing network of people I've been blessed with keep me grounded. Oh, and the occasional professional misstep definitely helps to remind you of how close you are at any given time to screwing up big time."

So where does family fit in with Magarian who as of yet, does not have one of his own? "I love children and working with foster kids is something I have really leaned into over the past several years." He says he does hope to have a family one day, but until then Ryan finds fulfillment in "engaging in activities where I can work on becoming a better servant, growing deeper in my faith, working with and having rich, intimate relationships with the people I love."

Get more at ryanmagarian.com / If you were hoping to read about his favorite cocktail, he invites you to find him behind the bar where he will happily make you one.

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