

Featherweight's 'The Cleaner' Cocktail Teams Gin and Bourbon

By [Billy Lyons](#)

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The Cleaner cocktail rarely leaves a trace.
Billy Lyons for the Village Voice

Creating cocktails off the beaten path sits just fine with [Featherweight's](#) (135 Graham Avenue, Brooklyn; 646-257-0946) Johnny De Piper. Tucked away under a large mural of a boxer, the bar itself is a testament to the obscure — a feather marks a nondescript door, which is the only indication of the warm environment inside.

Cut from the cloth of the Milk and Honey school of bartending, the bar offers a selection of updated classics, one of which is known as "The Cleaner." Although it sounds more like a boxing moniker, the name is actually a subtle reference to the film *Leon the Professional* and a similarly dangerous, yet pleasant drink.

"It's a play off the Hitman [cocktail]. It has the same kind of weird flavors going on," De Piper says. Those flavors have a lot to do with the use of Virgil Kaine high rye, which the bartender notes has a grassy, floral profile that works well with Aviation gin. Gin and bourbon may not be the most common tag team, but De Piper notes that the addition of high rye helped give the drink "a backbone." He originally started out using just gin, but found the drink needed to be punched up a little. Once he confirmed the pairing would work well together, allowing each spirit to shine without overshadowing one another, De Piper was able to add flavors he loves such as maraschino, ginger, and fresh lime.

"Maraschino is just such a weird ingredient to me. It's like nothing else," De Piper says. He might not have all of the words to describe its flavor, but De Piper's use of the cherry liqueur balances the cocktail. After all, even tough-sounding drinks named after fictional contract killers need to have some slight, unexplained sweetness to them.

De Piper feels that the drink is bold, and its non-traditional ingredients make it more appealing than the tried-and-true standard classics. "I think it's a little more adventurous. Gin pairs well with a lot of other things, but you rarely ever see it with bourbon," he explains.

The Cleaner by Johnny De Piper of Featherweight

1 ounce Virgil Kaine high rye
1 ounce Aviation gin
3/4 ounce fresh squeezed lime juice
1/2 ounce maraschino liqueur
1/2 ounce ginger syrup
Angostura bitters

Add all ingredients to a cocktail shaker. Shake and strain into a chilled glass. Top off with a few dashes of bitters.