

# Carte Blanche Mixology

FRESH IS THE KEY INGREDIENT AT  
THE COSMOPOLITAN OF LAS VEGAS

by E. C. Gladstone / photo by Eric Ito

From signage to spas to Cirque du Soleil shows, Las Vegas may not create trends, but it enlarges and enhances them in a way that no other city could. Take as one perfect example, the remarkable cocktail program at The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas.

This newest Strip casino/resort has many “wow” elements, but they all seem to revolve around what may be the world’s greatest bar crawl. Under the supervision of three competition cocktailers—Mariena Mercer, Andrew Pollard and Kristin Schaefer, all 27—each of the resort’s bars offers its own menu of signature cocktails, as well as wines by-the-glass and craft beers. A total of 150 unique hand-crafted cocktail recipes is available property-wide, most calling for specific brands, from Ransom Old Tom Gin (the Sage 75) to Aperol (the Aperol Necklace), and in the case of at least one, garnishes that cost over a dollar apiece (the Verbena’s szechuan button).

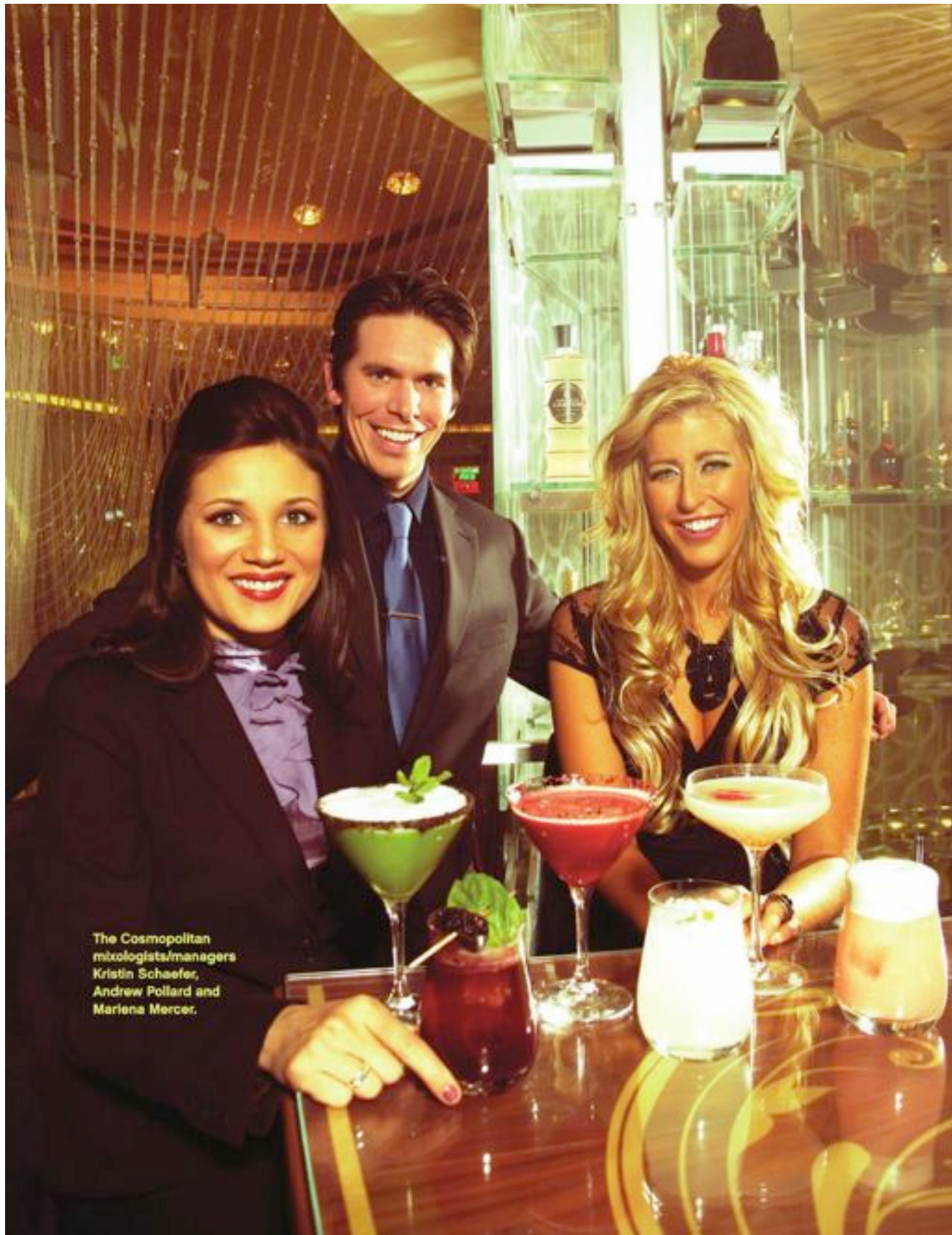
“In order to do a fresh program on this scale, we had to have carte blanche,” says Pollard. They got it, clearly: Mercer and Schaefer point out that almost all juices and syrups are made in-house (with bitters in the works), there’s not a single blender behind a bar, and ice is made in a slow-freezing Kold-Draft machine—the only one on the Strip. “It even sounds sexy when you shake it,” Schaefer says, with a wrinkle of the nose.

The results would inspire awe in even the most intrepid tippler. The property’s centerpiece **Chandelier** bar, encased in two million strung crystals, offers internationally-inspired drinks on the ground floor, a molecular mixology kitchen on the loge and, on the top retail-adjacent tier, more feminine Martinis and fruity Fizzes (all under Mercer’s watch). Adjacent to the hotel lobby, Pollard’s **Vesper** celebrates Mid-Century elegance, with vested bartenders creating twists on classic “up” drinks. Facing the Strip, Schaefer’s **Bond** features LED projections, uptempo house music and window-box dancers.

While **Book & Stage** is more focused on entertainment—sports on the TV screens and bands (often national acts) on the stage—there is also a carefully curated selection of craft beers here and at every other venue. **Queue** bar is specifically designed as a feeder to the rooftop **Marquee** (the largest day/night-club of its kind), a mood-setter and place to meet. Even the pool’s **Tiki** bar and **Sahra** spa have their own cocktails, and room service features a unique steamer trunk—essentially a full bar in a one-price box—readymade for a suite party.

Perhaps most impressively, staffers from all aspects of the property—down to valets and housekeepers—participated in spirits education by industry experts including Tony Abou-Ganim and Charlotte Voisey. “We’re going back to emphasizing service,” says Mercer. “Doing things because they’re the right thing to do.” ■

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Marlena Mercer.