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D.C.'s Cocktail Scene Takes a Rocks-Glass Run for the Money in 2018

With pop-up bars channeling popular TV shows and “grass-to-glass” drinks, mixology in D.C. ups the game.

By Jennifer Barger on January 24, 2018



“I’m Hip and Very Bitter” at Brothers and Sisters (©Antonio Dillard/Brothers and Sisters)

Absinthe-green street light filters through the marbled stained glass behind the bar at Brothers and Sisters (1770 Euclid St. NW), the new restaurant/cocktail lounge at Adams Morgan’s The Line Hotel. Since the new hotel and dining destination fills a restored 1912 church, it seems fitting that celebrated local mixologist Todd Thrasher has summoned a drinks program that’s one part hymn to historic highballs and two parts innovation. “I wanted things both for geeky cocktail people and stuff that tourists from Nebraska might recognize,” says Thrasher.

Perched on a clubby green leather bar stool in the high-ceilinged space, Thrasher chats about a drinks menu that reads like a lively history/recipe book: an Old Forrester

bourbon mint julep comes with an explanation of the concoction’s Washington, D.C., debut at the still-running Round Robin Bar at the Willard InterContinental Hotel. But those spirits savants can also try an “I’m Hip and Very Bitter” made with Virginia Fizz bubbles, locally produced amaro, gin and grapefruit juice.

Brothers and Sisters is the freshest sign that in recent years, Washington—always a zone of dimly lit hotel watering holes and Capitol Hill beer dives—has morphed into one of the country’s buzziest mixology towns. Think an intoxicating blend of local distilleries and sophisticated lounges that give booze-mad London or New York City a rocks-glass run for their money.