

A Quiet Drink

Steve Reddicliffe

Up on the Roof, Peaceful as Can Be



THE question isn't whether you can get a drink up on the roof; there are plenty of places in Manhattan for that every summer.

The challenge is finding a place to have a warm-weather cocktail or a quality beer, talk for a bit and take in a view that is more expansive than a skyline composed of vodka and bourbon bottles.

You want a quiet drink, but one amended for summer. That means some moderate noise — from the traffic, from a sound system, from the happy chatter of a crowd. You will probably drink out of a plastic cup. You will pay more than you expected for that drink in a plastic cup, but it is summer, after all, and you are outside. You will hear a song by Carly Rae Jepsen that may not be "Call Me Maybe" but could well be "This Kiss" and you will go with it.

The goal is always to do all of the things at a rooftop bar that seems happy to have you as a guest. Here, in Manhattan bars that fit the description,

Metro Roof Terrace

The rooftop at the Hotel Metro is casual, vacation vibe and a fantastic view of the Empire State Building, Macy's at Herald Square and the old Towers at 34th Street and Broadway. (Jackie Robinson lived there; it was the Hotel McAlpin.)

It also grows its own jalapeño-spicy margarita, which is not your everyday Manhattan agrarian occurrence.

The Roof Terrace is not fancy, but it passes the hotel's compact fitness on the way in, and the cups are plastic, but it is low-key fun. Roll-ups cover some of the seating, and the bar. The music is pop, from Perry, Enrique Iglesias, Pink, and at medium volume. Fashionable guys in sport coats to a guy in an Iron Maiden T-shirt (the far better choice on a steamy night in late June), always seems to be something on this 14th-floor space, and it is a comfortable place to kick back while creating a memorable perspective.

The drinks, fittingly enough, are toward the sort-of: a piña colada, a cast-appropriate Dark and Stormy made with Gosling's dark rum and anacardic ginger beer. (Most drinks are \$15.) Beers on tap include Brooklyn Lager, Blue Point and Harpoon I.P.A. (all \$8).

There were no homegrown drinks to be found on a recent visit, but a Patron tequila martini was out O.K.

The Roof Garden

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This being the Met, there is art. The current installation, which has the terrace painted in red-and-white patterns, is by Imran Qureshi, and previous summers have showcased work by Tomas Saraceno and Anthony Caro.

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METRO ROOF TERRACE, 45 West 35th Street, Manhattan; (212) 947-2500. Monday through Saturday, 5 to 10 p.m. Closed Sunday.

RARE VIEW, 303 Lexington Avenue, at 37th Street; (212) 481-1999. Monday through Thursday, 5 p.m. to midnight; Friday and Saturday, 4:30 p.m. to 1 a.m. Closed Sunday.

BOOKMARKS, 299 Madison Avenue, at 41st Street; (212) 204-5498. Monday through Thursday, 4 p.m. to midnight; Friday and Saturday, 4 p.m. to 1 a.m.; Sunday, 2 p.m. to midnight.

HI BAR, 308 West 58th Street, Manhattan; (212) 397-0404. Monday through Saturday, 5 p.m. to midnight. Closed Sunday.

ROOF GARDEN CAFE AND MARTINI BAR, Metropolitan Museum of Art; (212) 535-7710. Martini bar open Friday and Saturday, 5:30 to 8 p.m.



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There are also some strong drinks and sweeping views of Central Park, the Chrysler Building and the famous apartment buildings on the Central West, including the San Remo.

It's a great place to have a drink — though the limited seating and an 8 p.m. closing time make it hard to imagine anyone's having two — and to spend

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some of an early evening applauding the skyline. The crowd here includes people of all ages, from a young woman in booty shorts to an older woman wearing a boot cast.

The specialty drinks, priced at \$14 and served in (am I repeating myself?) plastic cups are fine: a martini made with Svedka vodka; a rosewater cocktail made with cachaca, rosewater essence, sparkling water, sugar, lemon juice and topped with yellow rose petals; and an iced black tea made with Jim Beam bourbon, simple syrup and cardamom pods.

"I don't know if the cardamom seeds really add anything," one of my son's friends remarked — because at a museum, everyone's a critic. (Beers, including Brooklyn Summer Ale, are \$9, and Hayes Ranch wines are \$12. Museum admission should be considered a cultural cover charge.)

The exit is down a mirrored stairwell, which constitutes something of an art installation of its own.

... doesn't have the impressive landmark vistas found at a number of other destinations — you can see the MetLife Building on Avenue of the Americas and some of the antenna of the Empire State Building — but it does deliver an experience that is more refined than that at many rooftops. It feels more sleek saloon than party cave.

Tables on the open-air terrace go fast, but the views along the window from the inside are good; inside is the place to be when the weather turns rainy, as it did on a recent weekend night.

Cocktails are served in glasses — real rooftop luxury — and they are solid. The Pulitzer is made with Plymouth gin, St-Germain elderflower liqueur, Fernet Branca, agave nectar and fresh lemon juice; the Hemingway has Santa Teresa rum, muddled mint, lime juice and a splash of Champagne. (Specialty drinks are \$15.50; beers range from \$8 to \$8.50; and sparkling cocktails made with juices and purées are \$15.)

Servers are pleasant and efficient. When Bookmarks is full, the noise doesn't interfere with conversation.

On the way in, the song was "My World Is Empty Without You," by the Supremes. On the way out, it was "Sunshine Superman," which prompted a discussion of whether any of us ever owned an entire album by Donovan.

The answer was no.

Hi Bar

Even though Hi Bar is just off Columbus Circle, in the 6 Columbus Hotel, it can feel a bit like a hideaway. That is still true even when the front of the bar, along 58th Street, is the site of a networking event for app developers, as was the case one night last month.

After determining that I was not among them, the bartender suggested that I head over to the patio on the other side of the elevator bank, where there were plenty of places to sit on wooden benches and enjoy a nice litchi martini with Ketel One (\$13). The menu lists shochu as the drink's liquor, but the bar-

... view from the 14th floor of the Hearst Tower is right there. The western corner of Central Park, the water tank, which would be out of place in one of the Edwardian paintings currently on view at Whitney. (Cocktails are served too, but not on a roof.)

The conversation in the elevator about apps, including one that facilitates recommending music to friends, was a common theme.

Among this group, at least, there was no mention of anything involving a van.

