

**THE BACK-TO-SCHOOL ISSUE!**

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# STAMFORD

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**CHEERS!**  
Our Best Bartender  
Contest at  
Harbor Point



## NOW SERVING

STAMFORD magazine's tenth annual **BEST BARTENDER CONTEST** shakes up the local cocktail competition, with Mixologist Judge Jeffrey Selden calling the shots

In the spirit of, well, spirits, Stamford sure knows how to make summer cocktails the star of a night well spent. At this year's Stamford's Best Bartender Contest **JEFFREY SELDEN**, managing partner at Marcia Selden Catering & Event Planning, returned as the event's guest judge—casting his eye on crafty cocktails and deciding who is worthy of the top-shelf prize, Judge's Pick. Ultimately, it was Siena's Antonio Assante drink, Passionate Affair, that made him swoon. Also, the crowd chose newcomer The Wheel's drink, Carter's Strawberry Patch, for People's Choice, and all the entries that evening left quite the impression. We followed up with Selden, who shared his thoughts on the event, its winners and a surprising-yet-inviting take on a party-favorite, Jell-O shots!

## COCKTAIL TALK



above: Jeffrey Selden

### 1 // Why is this event so special?

"This is an event that brings the community together to relax, enjoy new cocktails, have fun and just let your hair down! No formalities, no speeches and just a great big party that showcases the best in Stamford bartenders!"

### 2 // What trends did you observe from the drinks this year?

"Summery cocktail recipes that included a lot of herbal infusions, and the introduction of Italicus—an Italian liquor being made since the fifteenth century with rose petals and bergamot. It has a citrus, lightly green and grassy herbaceous-ness to it that is aromatic and delicious."

### 3 // What was it about Siena's drink that got your vote?

"I voted for this drink as I loved the flavor profile that included Pisco as the main ingredient. The cocktail had a beautifully balanced combination of flavors with the fresh lime, pineapple and

the topping of a cinnamon foam that added a unique taste and presentation to the overall drink. I was interesting that they chose Pisco

as the liquor, too, as it was a bit more adventurous."

### 4 // Where do you go for a good cocktail?



"Cugine in Stamford, Kawa Ni in Westport and South End in New Canaan."

### 5 // What is the most interesting drink you've ever crafted?

"Some fun modern versions of Jell-O shots that have been recreated with clean cocktails and unflavored gelatin to create any cocktail in a solid form and perfect for any party."

### 6 // What kind of Jell-O shot would you create?

"A Banana Colada! Banana juice (1 qt), vodka (does not have to be premium), Malibu Coconut Rum (1 cup) and 1.5 ounces of unflavored gelatin. Beware... these small treasures can pack quite a punch."



### 7 // What do you consider the most essential tools for a bartender?

"A muddler, great shaker set and a zester."

### 8 // What would you serve as a dessert drink?

"I am on the Espresso Martini trend right now and really enjoying those made with Patron XO Café liquor."



### 9 // Do you have any special bartender skills?

"Yeah—tasting as I go!"

### 10 // What ingredient did you recently discover—and fall in love with?

"My latest trip to Italy had me loving Amaro again. The bittersweet taste is something that I just enjoy as the perfect end to any dinner."



left: Prime's cocktail won People's Choice Award Runner-up.



right: Siena Ristorante receiving award for Judge's Pick.

# BEHIND THE BAR

STAMFORD magazine's **BEST BARTENDER CONTEST** poured on the competition—bringing exciting flavors to the forefront and happy party people to Harbor Point's waterfront

## JUDGE'S PICK

**Winner** // Siena Ristorante  
**Bartender** // Antonio Assante  
**Drink** // "Passionate Affair"  
**Ingredients** // BarSol Pisco, fresh passion fruit, freshly squeezed pineapple, lime juice, light/silky cinnamon foam

Siena Ristorante, known for its authentic, Tuscan cuisine and perfect date-night ambiance, won over the heart of Mixologist Judge Jeffrey Selden—taking home the coveted Judge's Pick Award that night. The creative mind behind the lovable libation, aptly named "Passionate Affair," was bartender Antonio Assante, who was inspired by a unique pairing he savored during a trip to his hometown of Monte Di Procida, Italy, last summer. "While on my trip, I enjoyed a

vodka-based cocktail with fresh passion fruit and immediately fell in love with the idea of incorporating fresh passion fruit into a cocktail," he says. "I decided to shake it up a bit and introduce Barsol Pisco as the base spirit complimented by notes of fresh passion fruit. As my first time competing in a bartending competition, I was blown away by how well organized the event was and how much fun everyone had. I'd like to thank Stamford magazine for putting together such a wonderful event."

## PEOPLE'S CHOICE

**Winner** // The Wheel at The Village  
**Bartender** // Kristin Welton  
**Drink** // "Carter's Strawberry Patch"  
**Ingredients** // Jalapeño-infused Don Julio Blanco tequila, strawberry purée and fresh lime juice

What better way to win over the people than incorporating one of the top fruits of the summer season: strawberries. Bartender Kristin Welton snagged the People's Choice Award for the new South End restaurant. As first-time competitors, their drink, "Carter's Strawberry Patch," made quite the impression with its sweet-and-spicy combination of jalapeño tequila and strawberry purée. "We are honored and humbled to have been awarded this

prestigious accolade," says Michael Marsilio, general manager. "Our team at The Wheel is committed to delivering exceptional service and works hard to continually innovate to bring guests the best experience. Being able to showcase our bartending talent at an interactive event like this one, alongside local friends and other successful restaurateurs, was really special. We are grateful to Stamford magazine for organizing a great evening and thankful to all who came out to support!"

## RUNNER-UP

**Winner** // Prime Stamford  
**Bartenders** // Charles Stedman and Diego Ramirez  
**Drink** // "Youth Serum"  
**Ingredients** // 2 oz. Kettle One Vodka, 1.5 oz. basil-infused cucumber juice, 1 oz. lemon juice and 1 oz. simple syrup

"The Best Bartender Competition does a fantastic job showcasing quality and diversity. Prime is extremely proud of the job Diego (bar manager), Jesus (creator of the cocktail), Maude (senior bartender) and Chef Julio (creator of the small bite) did representing Prime," says Charles Stedman, general manager of Prime Stamford. "We have already started brainstorming ideas for next year!"

PHOTOGRAPHS BY KYLE NORTON



# CHEERS, STAMFORD!

STAMFORD magazine's **BEST BARTENDER CONTEST** returned this year, and everything was perfect! Twelve local restaurants competed for top honors from an adoring crowd at Harbor Point. The sold-out event took place on ideal summer evening. Here are a few memories of the party; see more on Instagram @stamfordmag and online at [bestbartenderstamford.com](https://bestbartenderstamford.com). Farewell, summer—you were delicious!

1 Guests enjoyed bites 2 Lifted Spirits, Community Partner Sponsor 3 Diageo/Don Julio, Community Partner Sponsor 4 Guests were able to sample drinks from any of the twelve restaurants in the competition 5 Jeffrey Selden, Mixologist Judge and Event MC, and Managing Partner and cocktail creative behind Marcia Selden Catering's Liquid Kitchen 6 Russ Hollander and publisher Karen Kelly-Micka 7 Cisco Brewers, a Community Partner Sponsor 8 Harbor Point, a presenting sponsor 9 Table 104 10 A perfect evening to gather 11 Divina 12 Fortina



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