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The Black Manhattan at the Hive at Honey's.

drink this

BLACK MANHATTAN AT THE HIVE AT HONEY'S

By Michael Nagrant | FOR REDEYE

Like George Clooney, cocktails get better with age. So at around 135 years old (earliest printed mention is 1882, though some cocktail historians believe the drink was invented in 1870 at the Manhattan Club of New York City), the Manhattan, traditionally made with whiskey, sweet vermouth and bitters, is super fine.

Don Draper may prefer the Old Fashioned, but every time I drink that sugar cube-infused concoction, I feel like I'm contracting diabetes. As such, the more balanced and bitter-skewing Manhattan is usually the way I go with brown spirit-based cocktails. But as much as I like it, the Manhattan is like a grandparent. It's been around a long time, you're thankful for everything it's done for you, but it's not particularly cool, shiny or new, and you probably take it for granted.

Changing all that is The Hive (1111 W. Lake St., 312-877-5929), a semi-clandestine cocktail lounge located a flight of stairs above its sister restaurant, Honey's. Featuring a painting of Napoleon, flickering candelabra and shiny velvet couches, The Hive conjures what I imagine a young Liberace's studio apartment may have looked like before he hit the big time. Hive and Honey's partner Justin Furman describes the interior, designed by his wife Jen Dixon, as a "bohemian gentleman's vibe." The coolest

DRINK

The Hive at Honey's
1111 W. Lake St.
312-877-5929

visual is the silver flash of the Green Line blowing by The Hive's plate glass window every few minutes. Given the posh surroundings, one might

expect the tinkle of a harpsichord in the background, but partners Virgil Abloh and Paul Blair (DJ White Shadow) curate a bumping soundtrack of Jay-Z, Kanye West and Outkast.

Bartender Jon Waisman plays dealer's choice, serving up bespoke cocktails based on your taste preferences. When things get busy, he'll switch to a trio of set cocktails, one of which is a Manhattan. Not just any Manhattan, but an inspired viscous brew called a Black Manhattan (\$14) made of Rittenhouse Rye and Angostura bitters where Averna, an Italian digestif amaro, replaces traditional sweet vermouth. The Averna adds citrus and bitter notes while the rye bursts with spice, a touch of nuttiness and a hint of maple. The nuance of flavor leaves you esteeming the reinvention of a classic. The booziness in the glass also leaves you in hazy consideration of the cast of characters who rotate through the bar, a curious crowd of hipsters and hedge funders in harmony. I mentioned this to Furman who responded, "We've been pretty lucky to get a diverse crowd. We also know we're not for everybody. But, we'll be everything we can for those who like who we are."

Michael Nagrant is a RedEye freelancer.