

THE LOVE & SEX ISSUE

# LAS VEGAS WEEKLY

February 12-18, 2015 **FREE**  
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cuddling.  
Sultry cocktails.  
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SpongeBob  
boxers say  
about your  
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# Pillow talk

**PLUS...**

Our *Fifty Shades of Grey* film review  
Sexy French food from Michael Mina  
And Harry Reid, action hero?



**> MIXOLOGY AND MILLER HIGH LIFE** Nectaly Mendoza digs a good drink, whatever the fanciness quotient.

## THE LIFE OF A BARTENDER

For Herbs & Rye's Nectaly Mendoza, mixing cocktails has been more than a job

BY SARAH FELDBERG

→ The life of a bartender isn't what it used to be. There are still late nights, flirtatious guests and the occasional workplace shot or two, but once upon a time, working behind the stick meant mixing rum with Coke and vodka with tonic on your way to something better.

"Bartending used to be something you did before you went to college," says Herbs & Rye owner Nectaly Mendoza. "Now, it's a career."

It's also the subject of Mendoza's midnight showcase February 12 at Herbs & Rye, his bar and restaurant dedicated to classic cocktails made to the standards of yesteryear. Titled

Life of a Bartender, the event is about the experience of working the bar and getting pros together to talk about their lives as cocktail cooks.

The showcase is part of the second annual For the Love of Cocktails, a liquored-up celebration and benefit with boozy seminars on aromatic bitters, the pleasures of rum and home mixology, a wine dinner, a casual happy hour and a spirit-soaked gala at Mix Lounge atop the Delano on Friday night. That culminating party will feature tasty nibbles, DJs and dozens of local bartenders serving original creations.

Mendoza will be there, too, mix-

ing up a fresh invention that taps El Silencio Mezcal, beet juice, citrus, apple cider and a spicy rim. Though Herbs & Rye has been known for its menu of vintage cocktails divided by the various ages of drinking culture, these days the owner is focused on a more "global approach."

"The locals are pushing us," Mendoza says, explaining that he'll be competing in tournaments outside of Las Vegas, traveling more and working on a competition league for bartenders to test all-around masters of the craft who

are equally adept at mixing something delicious and making customers feel comfortable.

"The industry is veering toward a positive attitude," Mendoza says, "getting rid of the cockiness and the bartender with the mustache and the wax. We're creating more rock-star bartenders."

And Mendoza deserves to be on the A-list. A local kid who says he was in and out of jail as a trouble-making youngster, he landed his first hospitality job at Doña María Tamales—a busboy position that lasted all of two weeks. "My whole career was luck," Mendoza laughs.

During an interview at the Bellagio, he was asked to wait in a cubicle—and then left there for nine hours. When the interviewer realized what she had done, she offered him a job: glass polisher at Olives.

It doesn't sound like much, but it started Mendoza on a path that shaped his life. When he left the Bellagio, it was for a job as a barback with the then-new Light Group. "Three years later, they made me their beverage specialist for the entire company," Mendoza says proudly.

Today, he's the owner of a beloved local haunt where he says work never feels like it. "I truly wake up in the morning and I can't wait to get to Herbs & Rye," he laughs, adding that his already formidable drink list is still growing. "We just added on the Rat Pack Age, the Tiki Age, the Dark Ages." That last era is the most recent on the menu, just before the current resurgence when Red Bull vodkas were the order du jour.

Mendoza swears he loves all the epochs enshrined at Herbs & Rye. ("At the end of the day, I'm a frozen piña colada drinker at heart and a Miller High Life guy.") And working the bar hasn't been a job on the way to something else. Bartending is his career, his calling. "It's made me a better person. It's opened my eyes to a lot of things. It's let me see the world."

That's the life of this bartender, and it sounds pretty damn good.

**FOR THE LOVE OF COCKTAILS**  
February 12-14,  
times vary, \$50-  
\$300. Locations  
vary, [forthe love ofcocktails.com](http://forthe love ofcocktails.com).



**LOCAL TRACK OF THE MONTH**

### HARDNOX'S "IN VEGAS"

→ Party-rockin' duo and recent Sapphire Pool residents HardNox might just be the Sin City version of Bloodhound Gang, or even LMFAO, for that matter. Danny Boy and Jimbo (siblings Dan and Jim Kehoe) have no shame in their novelty-pop game, incorporating all the trademark sounds of commercial EDM and hip-hop to boisterous and mischievous effect. Though their ReverbNation page hosts some 65 productions—which include original tracks, remixes, parody numbers and tributes to their nightlife friends—the one to stream is "In Vegas," in which the two spit out countless local references (including just about every major club in town) atop a hard-driving 4/4 beat throughout, fade-ins during the verse and arpeggiated synth lines in the chorus. It's the song version of a crazy souvenir cocktail, or something you'd imagine DJs playing at GBDC or XIV Sessions. Either way, it might just stir up some civic pride for the fist-pumping set. —Mike Prevatt [reverbNation.com/hardnox](http://reverbNation.com/hardnox)

NECTALY MENDOZA BY CHRISTOPHER DEWARGAS