



THE LGBTQ VOICE SINCE 1978

# QVEGAS

FEBRUARY 2015



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THE *Love*

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ISSUE

INTRODUCING  
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## For the Love Of Cocktails

By Lauren Falkner



*QVegas caught up with Raul Faria to learn more about the "For the Love of Cocktails" benefit this month, what it's like being a gay bartender, and his new career representing Absolut.*

## HUNDREDS OF COCKTAILS • FIVE SEMINARS • THREE DAYS • ONE CAUSE

*For The Love Of Cocktails is Las Vegas' three-day premier mixology charity event, featuring seminars with industry leading mixologists, a grand gala cocktail reception with hundreds of handcrafted cocktails, and seminars on 12th-14th at Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino and Delano Las Vegas.*



**What is the "For the Love of Cocktails" event and who does it help? What does the charity do?**

For the Love of Cocktails was started as a benefit gala for the Helen David Relief Fund. This year it will be a three-day event with educational seminars by some of the most respected mixologists in the industry. Meet the Masters Dinner with wine pairings from top Sommeliers in Las Vegas, The Life of a Bartender event at Herbs & Rye and the Grand Gala which will feature bartenders and mixologists from the top resorts and restaurants in Las Vegas all creating original Valentine's Day cocktails. It's going to be a huge event for a good cause. The Helen David Relief Fund, that benefits bartenders and their families that have been affected by breast cancer, was started by Las Vegas Master Mixologist Tony Abou Ganim and was named after his Aunt who lost her battle with breast cancer. Helen taught Tony how to bartend and was his mentor.

**What is your involvement with For the Love of Cocktails?**

This will be my second year at For the Love of Cocktails. I'll be serving

my original cocktail featuring Absolut Orient Apple called the "Apple Ginger Kosmo" at the Grand Gala. I will also be coordinating the teams as the USBG representative before and during the event.

**What's it like to be a gay bartender in general? At this event?**

I would say being a gay bartender in Las Vegas sometimes has some unique challenges. It really depends on where you're bartending. Today it is more accepted to be out in the workplace than when I started bartending in 2000. Some restaurants or straight nightclubs made it difficult if you didn't fit the typical "dude" or "sports guy" role. For the most part though my experience bartending in Las Vegas has been amazing, from opening nightclubs like Krave to working at Piranha and Share I've had a blast watching our scene grow. Once I began competing in cocktail competitions I started focusing on education and honing my craft. That has led to traveling around the world, creating Mixology Made Simple, appearing as an Expert on Bar Rescue, being the first LGBT Vice President of the local United States Bartenders

Guild chapter and becoming the Absolut Brand Ambassador for Las Vegas.

**What is your career like and how well does Absolut represent the LGBT community?**

I couldn't be happier with what I'm doing professionally. I've always enjoyed teaching and the Ambassador role allows me the opportunity to share what I know about vodka and why Absolut is special. I also get to visit and host events for bartenders and beverage industry people around the city. One of the main reasons I really wanted to work for Absolut was its support of the LGBT community. Every drop of Absolut is made in Sweden and Sweden is one of the most progressive countries in the world when it comes to gay and transgender rights. Absolut was also the only large company in the 80's to advertise in LGBT magazines, we are also helping the launch G.L.A.S.S. the first LGBT beverage industry trade organization and we also released the Absolut Colors bottle in 2008 which was a collaboration with Gilbert Baker, the creator of the pride flag.

[www.gay.vegas/floc](http://www.gay.vegas/floc)