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RAISE A  
GLASS TO

## LAUREN MOTE

QUEEN OF  
VANCOUVER'S  
COCKTAIL SCENE



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# RAISE A GLASS TO LAUREN MOTE

Vancouver's cocktail darling spills on her favourite watering holes, boozy beverages and the business of bitters **BY JILL VON SPRECKEN // PHOTOS BY KK LAW**





Mote's Loup-Garou cocktail was a winner at the Diageo World Class Canada competition. The whisky-based concoction includes house-made cordial, smoked "sea salt" water and bitters by Bittered Sling

## TIME FLIES WHEN YOU'RE HAVING FUN.

"It seems like the last 16 years went by so quickly," says Lauren Mote, bar manager at Uva Wine & Cocktail Bar (page 64).

That's how long the master mixologist has been shaking, stirring and serving drinks—beginning as a budding bartender in Toronto before moving to Vancouver to work in some of the city's most iconic establishments.

This year is poised to be Mote's biggest and best yet. In May, she snagged *Vancouver* magazine's coveted Bartender of the Year award. Then, she went shaker to shaker against the country's best bartenders to win the Diageo World Class Canada competition—the first woman ever to do so. Her win will take her to Cape Town, South Africa, for the Diageo World Class Global Finals to represent Canada against ace bartenders from 57 countries.

"Competitions like that are a combination of natural talent and also life experience and preparation," says Mote. "Had you asked me five years ago if I would be able to do it, I would say no. But this year, this is an amalgamation of everything I've done, and I think I'm totally ready to represent proudly. This is 16 years now, on display."

If competing internationally and managing one of Vancouver's top cocktail spots sounds hectic, consider that Mote is also the co-founder of Bittered Sling, an award-winning line of small-batch bitters and extracts. The artisanal tinctures are indispensable to Mote's own back-bar: "In an Old Fashioned, I like to use Plum & Rootbeer bitters by Bittered Sling. In a Martinez, I like to use Orange & Juniper." For a souvenir worth the suitcase space, try the Kensington Dry Aromatic bitters, inspired by the famed Toronto market; or the Malagasy Chocolate, with cacao beans roasted at East Van Roasters in Gastown.

Any downtime the busy bartender and mixologist does have is often spent outdoors. "The life-

style of being surrounded by mountains and ocean is kind of an amazing thing, coming from a concrete jungle," she says. "I like picnics, I enjoy being outside. I have a single-speed bike that I basically ride everywhere." For Mote, running, hiking, biking and working out is integral to balancing her busy day-to-day. "It's really the only way I can cope with the amount of stuff I've got going on in life."

When Mote isn't mixing drinks herself, you might find her on the other side of the wood at The Keefe Bar (page 63), where her close friend Danielle Tatarin shakes up superb sippers. She also praises the cocktail programs at city stalwarts CinCin (page 83), West (page 90), Lobby Lounge (page 64) and Yew (page 89). "And Uva. I like to drink at my own bar," she says, laughing.



The cocktail roster at Uva is immense, but Mote has a few suggestions for those unsure of what to order. "Mai Tai #3 is one of our most popular cocktails if you want a spin on a classic. For something that's unique to Uva, I would suggest having the Apple Cart or the Gin-Gin Donkey. Both are very popular shaken cocktails. And then for stirred cocktails, we're really well-known for the Peater Rabbit and the Wolverine."

Mote's own drink order is a little simpler. "After tasting so many cocktails during service, I'm really just super happy with a beer and a whisky on the side," she says. "But if I travel to other places, I usually always start with a Negroni, because that's a good judge of how the bartender actually makes cocktails."

But when Mote's behind the bar, there's no need to test talent—which is why her next sip of that classic cocktail may be on her upcoming competition in South Africa. "Being the first woman to represent Canada in the global finals, I think that's an incredible privilege. So much has happened; personal and professional growth. It's an amazing thing." **W**