

MARKET WATCH

Cinematic Inspiration

San Francisco's Foreign Cinema restaurant and Laszlo bar offer movie-themed cocktails

When Foreign Cinema opened 10 years ago in San Francisco's Mission District, its creators were targeting movie buffs. Chefs and owners Gayle Pirie and John Clark envisioned that guests would come for the art—foreign and indie films play daily, and posters and canvases hang on the walls—and maybe enjoy a cocktail or bite to eat. However, a decade later, the food and beverage selections have made Foreign Cinema and adjacent bar Laszlo, which the husband-and-wife duo opened in 2000, a bona fide drinks and dining destination.

"Foreign Cinema is completely unique," says bar manager Bryan Ranere, who has been with the restaurant since it opened. "What we offer that no one else does is a complete sensory experience. There's something artistic going on in your glass, on your plate and on the wall."

Ranere, 40, manages the beverage programs for Foreign Cinema and Laszlo, and while the venues are side-by-side, each has its own distinct focus. At Foreign Cinema, Ranere emphasizes classic drinks, mixing in modern tweaks and ingredients to keep the offerings fresh. At Laszlo, meanwhile, the cocktail menu is equal parts contemporary and vintage (specialty drinks are \$10 to \$12 at Foreign Cinema and \$8 at Laszlo).

Drinks selections at both venues follow the movie premise and incorporate elements from each space's interior design. "All of the drinks in the restaurant are inspired by cinematic ideas and named after films or characters in films," Ranere



As bar manager at Foreign Cinema and Laszlo in San Francisco, Bryan Ranere makes silver screen-worthy drinks.

says. "Laszlo's drinks are film-themed too, but that bar has Eastern European propaganda posters on the wall so we also have drinks to reflect that."

Foreign Cinema shares its entrance with an art gallery, adding to the creative energy of the space. Guests enter through a long hallway that leads to a courtyard with outdoor seating, and Ranere describes the décor as industrial-chic. At Laszlo, a club vibe definitely prevails, as the bar hosts DJs nightly and offers bottle service (\$175 to \$225 a 750-ml. bottle) in the mezzanine level.

Mediterranean and California fare dominate Foreign Cinema's food menu (entrées are \$17 to \$27). Accordingly, wine is popular, and the restaurant has roughly 250 selections (\$8 to \$22 a glass; \$16 to \$90 a half bottle; \$18 to \$150 a 750-ml. bottle), many of which can also

be ordered at Laszlo. Craft beers, led by Belgian and European brews, have a niche as well, and each venue lists 10 to 12 choices (\$4 to \$8 a bottle).

Working at Foreign Cinema and Laszlo is a dream job for Ranere, as he studied film at Temple University. The 20-year bartending veteran, who takes great pride in his craft, is developing a few new bar projects, including one with the owners of Foreign Cinema. "It's always exciting when someone is enthusiastic and tries to elevate their skills," Ranere says. "Bartenders in San Francisco take their work seriously." **mw**

Laura Pelner

Bryan Ranere's Recipes

City Of God (\$10)



INGREDIENTS:

2½ ounces Oronoco Brazilian rum;
3 ounces papaya purée;
juice of half a lime;
salt;
lime wheel.

RECIPE:

Rim a Collins glass with salt, fill with ice and set aside. Shake rum, purée and juice vigorously in an ice-filled shaker and strain into the glass. Garnish with a lime wheel.

Heat Seeker (\$8)



INGREDIENTS:

3 ounces Absolut Peppar;
1 ounce Cointreau;
4 lime quarters;
1 orange slice.

RECIPE:

Muddle the lime and Cointreau in a shaker. Add vodka and ice and shake vigorously. Strain into a Martini glass and garnish with an orange slice.