

# Cheers to Cognac

MAKE MERRY WITH INDULGENT WINTER COCKTAILS AT BOSTON'S MOST SOPHISTICATED LOUNGES. BY BRANDY RAND

## Ashmont Grill

This neighborhood mainstay manages to elevate beloved classic comforts—both on the plate and in the glass. Take the Ginger Spiced Sidecar (Cognac, Domaine de Canton ginger liqueur, sour mix, and orange zest, with a ginger-sugared rim), an enlivened iteration that warms the taste buds. **555 Talbot Ave., Dorchester, 617-825-4300; ashmontgrill.com**

## Avery Bar

Have your cake and drink it, too—the official dessert of Massachusetts is transformed into the ultimate indulgence, a martini aptly named the Boston Cream Pie (Hennessy V.S, Godiva chocolate liqueur, crème anglaise, and a dash of vanilla extract). This tempting combination blends kitchen and cocktail to create a hedonistic dessert-in-a-glass. **10 Avery St., 617-574-7100; ritzcarlton.com/boston**

## Local 149

The story behind the Noah Calhoun (VSOP Cognac, Booker's bourbon, Amaro Montenegro, and vanilla cherry bark bitters) may be familiar to fans of the movie *The Notebook*. The cocktail was created by a bartender during a time of heartbreak and is recommended to patrons as a “strong drink to sip when contemplating lost love.” **149 P.St., 617-269-0900; local149.com**

## Russell House Tavern

If you've ever been to New

Orleans, you've experienced what Bar Manager Sam Gabrielli calls a quintessential classic—the Vieux Carré (Ansac V.S. Cognac, Old Overholt rye, sweet vermouth, and angostura and Peychaud's bitters). His approach is all about “striking a balance between familiar, classic cocktails and modern, handcrafted recipes using only fresh juices, homemade syrups, and infusions.” **14 John F. Kennedy St., Cambridge, 617-500-3055; russellhousecambridge.com**

## Steel & Rye

This suburban outpost is known for its whiskey-centric beverage program focusing on classic cocktails with a twist. Beverage Director Ted Gallagher created the Stagecoach Traveler (Pierre Ferrand 1840, Old Overholt rye whiskey, Aperol, S. Maria al Monte, a rinse of absinthe, and orange oil) as a nod to Milton's past, when Canton Avenue was a well-trodden stagecoach route. **95 Eliot St., Milton, 617-690-2787; steelandrye.com**

## Tavern Road

The road well-traveled often leads to a great cocktail—so believes Beverage Director Ryan McGrath. That's why he created a special “Cocktails from Friends” menu featuring a selection of drinks from fellow bartenders both near and far. The Carson's Beach Cooler (Cognac, Lillet Blonde, Punt e Mes, and Fee Brothers rhubarb bitters) was created by local mixologist Bill Codman.

**343 Congress St., 617-790-0808; tavernroad.com**

## Tres Gatos

This neighborhood hangout is like a modern-day salon, where locals gather to browse through books and real record albums—all while nibbling on tapas and sipping wine. The recent addition of live music makes this an ideal day-to-night spot to get your cocktail on. Try the Van Zandt Was Here (Grand Marnier Cuvée du Centenaire, white crème de cacao, and cream). **470 Centre St., Jamaica Plain, 617-477-4851; tresgatosjp.com**

## 29 Sudbury

Named after a legendary, decades-old speakeasy located in Wayland, the Mansion Inn Sidecar (Hennessy Cognac and Cointreau with a lemon twist, in a fresh-lemon-and-sugar-rimmed cocktail glass) is simple, balanced, and full of flavor, much like chef Evan Deluty's rustic Italian fare. **29 Hudson Road, Sudbury, 978-443-1700; no29sudbury.com**

## Violet Thorn

Don't feel guilty putting up the in-laws at the chic Verve Hotel over the holidays. With a hipster lounge serving crafted concoctions like the Detrimento Cognac Cocktail (Cognac, Reposado tequila, lime juice, Cointreau, and agave nectar), you can still have quality time and fun with the family. **1360 Worcester St., Natick, 508-416-1352; vervehotelnatick.com BC**



## 'TIS THE SEASON

Wishful drinking with **Keith Harmon**, wine and beverage director at Tres Gatos.



**What's your go-to holiday Cognac cocktail?** I have to go with the Brandy Alexander, which I drink once a year on Christmas Eve. No self-respecting hedonist would turn it down. **What's the story behind your version of the classic Brandy Alexander?** Years ago I placed it on a menu, calling it Van Zandt Was Here, and we sold out every time it snowed, which was no small feat when you consider the price tag on the Grand Marnier Cuvée du Centenaire. It's sinful and simple, and I can imagine Escoffier drinking about a dozen of them.



Tres Gatos' decadent Van Zandt Was Here cocktail.