

Bartender's Guide, 1862 Reprint

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Feature Essay: Civil War Obscura

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Thomas, Jerry, ed. *Bartender's Guide, 1862 Reprint: Containing Receipts for Mixing All Kinds of . . . Fancy Drinks*. Chump Change, Reprint from Dick & Fitzgerald, Publishers, 1862. PAPERBACK. \$10.77 ISBN 9781440453267 250 pp

Just in Time for the Holidays!

The holidays are upon us, and readers of this regular feature essay might consider including something ‘Civil Warish’ in their celebrations. The reprint of Jerry Thomas's *1862 Bartender's Guide* will become one of those books pulled out at odd times, to plan a party or just to peruse. It is amazing.

It was first published as *How to Mix Drinks, or the Bon Vivant's Companion* in 1862, and its drinks, such as the Mint Julep (recipe #88, p.45) and Egg Nog (recipe # 81, p. 40), still delight drinkers and historians today. Readers may concoct individual drinks and punch for large punch bowls. Drinks can be served hot, cold, iced, and mulled. Professor Jerry Thomas explains at least twelve kinds of cocktails— punches, nogs, juleps, smashes, cobblers, cocktails, sangarees, mulls, toddies, slings, sours, and flips—and provides easy-to-understand directions and a table of equivalent modern measures. Readers will not only have copies of recipes for nineteenth-century beverages, but also brief histories of each drink and its variations.

Thomas also explains how to manufacture a variety of alcohol. Of course, no living history encampment is complete without at least trying to make cider or “fancy” alcoholic syrup (liqueurs) to enjoy around the evening campfire. Readers who use this book can impress their “pards” by scattering seemingly careless referrals to Danzinger Drops, Bakalava Nectar, Locomotive, and the impressive Blue Blazer into the conversation.

For those who do not imbibe, there is a chapter on “Temperance Drinks.” A short section (pp. 83-87) is devoted to creating alcohol-free drinks. It contains fifteen recipes beginning with *Plain Lemonade*:

Cut in very thin slices 3 lemons, put them in a basin, add half a pound of sugar, either white or brown; bruise all together, add a gallon of water, and stir well. It is then ready (recipe #223, p. 83).

One fascinating take on a refreshing libation is *Drink for the Dog Days*:

A bottle of soda-water poured into a large goblet, in which a lemon ice has been placed, forms a deliciously cool and refreshing drink; but should be taken with some care, and positively avoided whilst you are very hot (recipe #229, p. 85).

Incidentally, bartender and author Harry Johnson, who owned and operated saloons across the U.S. in the late-nineteenth century and the early-twentieth century, called the latter “an excellent morning drink to regulate the bowels.”

There are plenty of recipes for beers. They range from Hop (recipe #213, p. 162) and Spruce Beer (recipe # 339, p. 196) to something called Instantaneous Beer (recipe # 251, p. 172). Anyone interested in opening a Civil War-themed brewery will find everything necessary to brew up the next must-have IPA. Just let **Civil War Obscura** know where and when the grand opening will be held!

One hint that this writer can vouch for personally is the creation of “fizzy” drinks such as lemon soda. This is a massive hit at reenactments, especially on hot days. The recipe is based on that familiar reaction of effervescing or fuzzing-up that makes the construction of a paper mâché volcano such fun. The acidity of the fresh lemon juice combined with the base carbonate of soda assures that it will all succeed. Here is the recipe for *Soda Nectar*, which will work with any just-squeezed citrus juice:

Juice of one lemon, (orange, grapefruit or 2-3 limes)

3/4 tumblerful of water

Powdered white sugar to taste

1/2 teaspoon of carbonate of soda

Strain the juice of the lemon, and add it to the water, with sufficient white sugar to sweeten the whole nicely. When well mixed, put in the soda, stir well, and drink while the mixture is in an effervescing state (recipe #228, p. 85).

Try to find block ice to cool the drink when making this at a reenactment. Then, have the West Point officers do the chipping.

The one thing missing is a recipe for real root beer. There are recipes for root-based beverages throughout *Bartender's Guide*, but none of them seem exactly right for reproducing

Civil War root beer. Harriet Tubman made ends meet while she served with the 2nd South Carolina Volunteers under U.S. Col. James Morgan by creating and selling pies, gingerbread, and root beer. And if the Combahee River Raid (June 2, 1863) depended on Harriet Tubman for its success, then where is that root beer recipe?

Bartender's Guide, 1862 Reprint: Containing Receipts for Mixing All Kinds of . . . Fancy Drinks by Jerry Thomas is highly recommended for the bookshelves of historians and buffs alike. It is funny, charming, and informative. It deserves some love.

Meg Groeling received her Master's degree in Military History, with a Civil War emphasis, in 2016, from American Public University. Savas Beatie published her first book, The Aftermath of Battle: The Burial of the Civil War Dead, in the fall of 2015, and she has written First Fallen: The Life of Colonel Elmer Ellsworth, which Savas Beatie also publishes. In addition, she is a regular contributor to the blog Emerging Civil War. She and her husband live with three cats in a 1927 California bungalow covered with roses on the outside and books.