

The Savoy Cocktail Book

BEING in the main a complete compendium of the Cocktails, Rickeys, Daisies, Slings, Shrubs, Senashes, Fizzes, Juleps, Cobblers, Fixes, and other Drinks, known and vastly appreciated in this year of grace 1930, with sundry notes of amusement and interest concerning them, together with subtle Observations upon Wines and their special occasions.

BEING in the particular an elucidation of the Manners and Customs of people of quality in a period of some equality.

The Cocktail Recipes in this Book have been compiled by
HARRY CRADDOCK

OF THE
SAVOY HOTEL
LONDON.

The Decorations are by
Gilbert Rumbold.

LONDON :
CONSTABLE & COMPANY, LTD.

1930

Title page of the 1930 Savoy Cocktail Book. *Courtesy Peter Harrington Ltd*

The Savoy Cocktail Book of 1930

SPENCER W. STUART

To leaf through the first edition of the *Savoy Cocktail Book*, its illustrations of places and people (both near and far) and origin myths of cocktails you have heard of (but never tried), is a glimpse into a luxurious world on the silver screen. For many within its time, especially in Britain, the *Savoy Cocktail Book*'s design elements and its namesake building were a distant world. Famously 'Dedicated to you', the *Savoy Cocktail Book* when it was published in 1930 was more than a guide as to how to fix a drink in the 'American style' (that is, with two or more liquors). There were plenty of those lining the shelves when it was first offered on that Trafalgar Day. And, indeed, many more to come. Instead, the *Savoy Cocktail Book* was striving to provide (self-deprecatingly) 'elucidation of the Manners and Customs of people of quality in a period of some equality'. Within its pages, in a light-hearted fashion, it offered this and more: codes of conduct and modes of behaviour in and around the thoroughly modern act of an evening's drink. What's more, its publication coincided with the development of Britain's often tenuous relationship with the Modern aesthetic, ultimately emerging from it as both widely accepted by the British public and emblematic of a distinctly British Art Deco style.

English Art and Industry were not prepared for the 1925 Paris Exhibition, which would later be characterized as the international showcase of what we now refer to as Art Deco. In the face of similar industrial transformations taking place in Western nations such as the United States, France and Germany, England remained reticent to adopt new design to reflect the freshly arrived Machine Age. Her foray into Modern design was a compromise between the developments of Modernism on the Continent (and with them prescriptions of radical socio-political change) and the ostentatious expressions of Americans that came to be defined by historians following World

War II.¹ In summarizing English taste at the time, Hillier observed ‘a desire to acknowledge modernity through image and decoration, yet a concurrent suspicion of complete capitulation in the face of rapid technological change.’² There were areas in which new styles were being explored, namely domestic interiors and high-street architecture. As it relates to the *Savoy Cocktail Book*, a consideration of domestic interiors is as important as the Savoy itself. For, although the book represented an institution, it was also used in emerging domestic settings.

Through the 1920s and 30s, Britain saw the development of an upper middle class and a rapid change in housing as suburban sprawl began. In 1923, the number of new homes averaged 6,000 a year. A decade later, in 1933, Britain recorded the building of 73,000 new homes within a 12-month period.³ Within these new developments (that came to be referred to by critics as ‘Stockbroker Tudor’) were changes both in the furnishings and in the whole relationship to tradition. By the late 1920s and into the 30s British furniture manufacturers continued to offer solid hardwood options to consumers while at the same time introducing more modern styles that would be characterised as Art Deco with decorative motif. In subtle ways through the period, one witnesses companies such as Shoolbread, Betty Joel, Cox & Co and Bath Cabinet Makers providing the option of new styles at accessible prices for this emerging social class. However, the adoption of these changes remains speculative. Reviewing catalogues of the time can provide indication of demand and the fact that these offerings continued confirms market acceptance. Nowhere was the Art Deco style more overtly expressed than in the luxury world of hotels and the entertainment world of theatres.

As is still the case, the Savoy Hotel was an establishment that adapted to remain relevant. Opened in August of 1889, it is considered by its archivist, Susan Scott, to be the first deluxe hotel in London. Reviewing its list of amenities, one can see why: hot and cold running water on all floors, room service via telephone, lifts

1. Hillier/Escritt, 167.

2. Hillier/Escritt, 184.

3. Hillier/Escritt, 147.

to all levels, fully-plumbed bathrooms for every three guest rooms and, most importantly, electric lighting throughout. The Savoy was a beacon of modern comforts to wealthy American travelers. And, as has also been observed by Scott, the American Bar was at the root of its origins, having been clearly marked on the 1893 floor plans. Although government research initiatives focusing on Art and Industry were slow to respond to what was exhibited in Paris in 1925, directors at the Savoy were quick to adopt the styles seen there. The Savoy archives depict an interior being utterly transformed, culminating in the replacement of the original Edwardian stone arch to the iconic chrome façade with the hotel's name in sans-serif. *The Savoy Cocktail Book*, however, offered something more. Although it certainly added to the prestige and draw of the American Bar, it also brought the American Bar into the homes of many Britons. And who better to be leader of this introduction than the social chameleon, the man without qualities: barman Harry Craddock.

Born in Burleigh, Minchinhampton in August 1875, Harry left for New York in 1897 at the age of twenty-one. The details of his life during his early years in the States remain obscure and he was known to either deflect questions about or embellish the details of his professional development. He was a conjurer of drinks and a crafter of witticisms, but always remained a bar's length away from those reporters who claimed to have the latest scoop on his daily habits. What is certain is his historically opportune timing, being introduced to the trade of bartending as it was transitioning from the role of saloon-keeper to mixologist.⁴ By June 1900, he held the position of bartender at a hotel in Cleveland before moving to Chicago to work at the Palmer House. Then he moved to New York, working at the Hotel Knickerbocker in Manhattan, followed by a managerial position at the Hoffman House bar at 24th and Broadway. Around 1915, he became a bartender at the Holland House located at 30th Street and Fifth Avenue, a legendary site within American cocktail lore. During this period he became a naturalized American citizen and in 1917 married an Irish widow, Annie Fitzgerald. The

4. Miller/Brown, 115.

enforcing of the National Prohibition Act (commonly referred to as 'Volstead Act') in January of 1920 changed everything for Craddock and, despite being granted an American passport two months after Prohibition, there was little future for him Stateside. With experience in some landmark American cocktail bars, Craddock returned to England in April of 1920 with his wife and daughter, securing a bartending position at the Savoy the following November.⁵ It would be five years until he replaced Ada 'Cooley' Coleman as head bartender of the American Bar. However, his experience and the dilution of his English accent brought an authentic feel to the joint. His ascendance had him fuse with all things American about cocktail culture at the time.

Although often associated with Harry Craddock, the idea for the book came from the Savoy hotel group's managing director, George Reeves-Smith. Reeves-Smith's involvement with the company dated back to beginning of the century when he was hired by Richard D'Oyly Carte to replace César Ritz. Prior to this, he had made a name for himself within the luxury hotels of London, serving as manager of the Berkeley Hotel, Piccadilly beginning in 1893. Following four years at the Berkeley, he led a management buy-out of the hotel, becoming its principal shareholder and managing director. These ambitious moves brought him to the attention of D'Oyly Carte, who bought the Berkeley and made Reeves-Smith the managing director. Reeves-Smith is said to also have had an expert knowledge of wines, having apprenticed under the direction of J. Calvet et cie (the notable Bordeaux wine négociants). As is observed by Scott, the Savoy archives provide no lead-up or information about negotiations regarding the development of the book, save for a signed agreement by the then director of publicity, Richard Temple, with Constable & Co. on April 1, 1930. The Savoy archives suggest that American Bar frequenter and second son of Oscar Wilde, Vyvyan Holland, was set to write the accompanied text while Gilbert Rumbold was to provide the array of illustrations that have come to align the book with Art Deco graphic design. Echoing the vibrant colours and strong one-dimensional quality of

5. Scott, IV.

designers from the previous decade such as Robert Bonfils in France and Edward McKnight Kauffer, Rumbold's bold illustrations expanded on being merely decorative patterns. Instead they offered an irreverence Robert Harbison characterised as an aesthetic affect of Art Deco to 'turn machines into comfortable jokes, present[ing] them pot-bellied and lazy-looking.'⁶ Within its pages there is little effort on the part of Rumbold to depict the glamorous life of the Bright Young Things with sincerity. Instead, it is peppered with caricatures, the brooding writer, the hobby painter, the skittish butlers, perhaps farcical depictions made as a wink and nod to readers at home; strangers on the outside looking in. There were other generous offerings to the graphic layout and design of the book printed by Lowe and Brydone. Not only was there space in the margins and between recipes (occasionally, in early copies, a collector may find recipes penciled in to correspond with a relevant section), but also blank pages at the back for 'any new Cocktails that may be invented in the future'.

Encapsulating moods of the time, the *Savoy Cocktail Book* was an instant success, earning a second printing by the end of 1930 and two printings the following year. In 1933, an enlarged cloth-bound edition was published, replacing the eye-catching metallic and lime green cover (not unlike the rebrand taken up by the Savoy in 2010 following a £220 million renovation). The dust-jacket of the 1933 edition includes the silhouetted man in red, yellow, green, and black. Before the decade was out, its cover would celebrate having sold more than 50,000 copies. The editions and redesigns would continue throughout the century and onward, bringing in other designers such as Peter Goffin in the 1950s and publishers such as Simon and Schuster and Pavilion. What's more, the original recipes have been added to by current bartenders, as may be seen in the re-editions done in the 1950s and in the 2011 Pavilion edition.⁷

It would be unfair to Craddock to quit the subject without listing a couple of recipes. One, the Hanky Panky, was invented by his pre-

6. Harbison, 58.

7. A thorough listing of the various re-prints can be found in the uncredited essay by Susan Scott of the Constable & Brown edition published in 2015 on the occasion of the Savoy's 125th birthday.

decessor Ada Coleman, who was the only female bartender for the American Bar between 1903 and 1925. It was always said she mixed it for Sir Charles Hawtrey, the actor.

2 dashes of Fernet Branca

½ Italian Vermouth

½ Dry Gin

The other is Craddock's signature cocktail, the White Lady:

¼ Lemon juice

¼ Cointreau

½ Dry Gin

Shake well and strain into a cocktail glass.

In 1939, Craddock left the Savoy to go to the Dorchester Hotel. His successor at the Savoy was Edwin Clarke, best known for his hangover cure, the Prairie Oyster, which essentially consisted of Worcestershire sauce, vinegar and tomato juice. The raw egg that was also called for was to give it a veneer of medical respectability.⁸

When the *Savoy Cocktail Book* was published, it was, by its association and consumption, at the center of debates about design, how people spent their leisure time, and class. Through its tongue in cheek tone and irreverent illustrations, it defused these tensions to become an icon with an enduring legacy. That was due, in part, to its innocuous format: the book. In a time in which Modern British design was virtually non-existent internationally, the *Savoy Cocktail Book*, it could be said, was one of the most widely exported examples of British Art Deco design. There is little doubt the book will not go unnoticed within this century, even in the feverish climate both online and in-print relating to cocktail culture. Part of this is to do with the raw material: the undisputed foundational recipes gathered by Craddock. Another part is the prestige assigned to the place and time from which it emerged. Despite its many re-designs, below the surface remains the sleek metallic cover of the Machine Age surrounding a radioactive man taking Craddock's words

8. In 1939 a book by Ambrose Heath had been published called *Good Drink*. In it was a cocktail called the Choirboy, a non-alcoholic concoction in anticipation of the war and shortages of important cocktail ingredients. However, it still called for half an orange, the same of lemon, 'grenadine to taste' and 'possibly a touch of sugar.' The Prairie Oyster has proved more popular.



Harry Craddock burying a cocktail shaker containing his signature White Lady into a wall of the American Bar during its renovations in 1927.

Courtesy Savoy Group Archives

to heart when drinking a cocktail: have it 'quickly, while it's still laughing at you.'

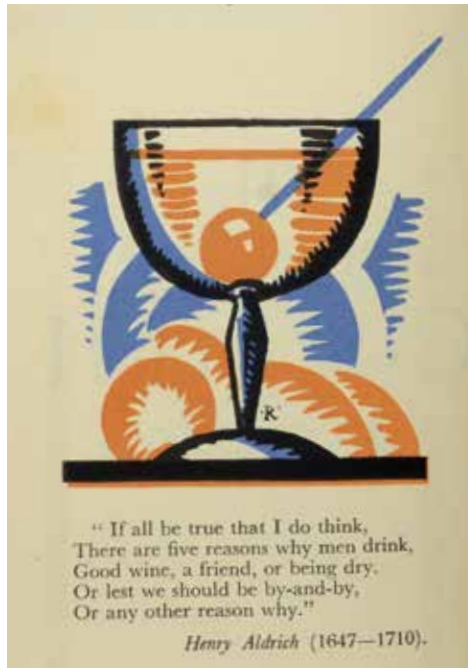
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Courtesy Peter Harrington Ltd