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Tiki Chic

High-octane tropical cocktails get high-end upgrades at Three Dots and a Dash's offshoot, The Bamboo Room. *By Ariel Cheung*

A lot has changed in the six years since the legendary Paul McGee opened Three Dots and a Dash. The rare-spirits scene has exploded—helped in part by McGee's own Lost Lake and Milk Room—and while the dimly lit, larger-than-life tiki bar has maintained its extravagant flair, the time had come to turn the dial up a notch, says Beverage Director Kevin Beary. “We had a demographic that had a heightened interest in rum and tiki cocktails, and we were looking for a better way to cater to them,” he says.

The Bamboo Room, carved out just in front of the hostess stand, provided the answer to Beary's dilemma. Deliciously exclusive, the 22-seat bar-within-a-bar sheds a little of the Three Dots schtick—but not all—to focus on high-end rums and innovative cocktails that weren't otherwise feasible. “These are drinks we've come up with over the years that we thought were really great, but would be a bit overwhelming for the volume we see in our main room,” Beary says. “They're very technique-forward, using ingredients that need expertise to master.”

Front and center is the house daiquiri program, with four rum blends that span from an amber-hued Ron del Barrilito three-star rum to the Clement Canne Bleue rum agricole, a subsection of rum derived from sugar cane and produced exclusively in Martinique. “A rum like that shows itself particularly well in a daiquiri,” Beary notes.

Served up, the rum agricole blanc daiquiri (\$13) is a refreshing blend of sweetness and high-octane chutzpah—for a little dilution, get it served over shaved ice made from cold-pressed pineapple juice.

Like the drinks at Three Dots, The Bamboo Room's concoctions are strong, so sip slowly. It would be nice if, like its big sister, the new bar offered some snacks to temper the booze, but in the meantime, the large-format Missionary's Downfall (\$28, serves two) helpfully comes with a few slices of starfruit and dragonfruit to tide you over. Served in a carved-out pineapple, the blend of 2005 Don Q single-barrel rum, Don Pancho eight-year rum, peach, mint, pineapple and honey stays light on the palate, and the optional green Chartreuse sidecar (\$10) elevates the drink with an herbaceous edge.

Beary seems to be having fun with the selection of what he's dubbed “modern tiki cocktails.” Grab a seat at the bar to witness the craftwork that goes into drinks like the Tall Drink in a Short Glass (\$13), a play on the iconic Jamaican Wray & Ting cocktail. Along with high-ester Jamaican rum, Espadín mezcal and jerk spice, Beary takes clarified white grapefruit juice and force-carbonates it with agave for a house version of the popular Ting soda. “We strayed a little too far from the original historic recipes to call them that,” Beary says. Then again, change is a good thing; after all, it's what The Bamboo Room is all about.

Clockwise from left: The Bamboo Room is a verdant offshoot of Three Dots and a Dash; the Chancer in the Aloha Shirt (\$16); Kevin Beary pours the Kona Coffee Grog (\$26).



THE BAMBOO ROOM

435 N. Clark St.

312.610.4220, threedotschicago.com/thebambooroom

Prices: Cocktails, \$10-\$28

Hours: Open Thu.-Fri., 4PM to midnight;
Sat.-Sun, 2PM to midnight

