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Feature | Dining

Super shaker with a dash of chill

By Sam Riley | 2009-12-17 | NEWSPAPER EDITION

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Georgie Yam (left), founder of Dragonfly, presents the trophy to champion barman Justin Xu.

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SHANGHAI'S barmen have been tasting and experimenting with different recipes, but only one drink has been crowned after seven grueling weeks of high-pressure bartending at the Dragonfly Cocktail Competition.



With the clock ticking, some of Shanghai's best barmen vied to be crowned "King of the Cocktails" at M1NT last week when the therapeutic retreat Dragonfly held its grand finale.

Justin Xu, a barman who has plied his trade at the plush Kee Club before moving into the sleek surrounds of Sin, won top prize for what he described as his "fruity, restorative and relaxing concoction" that will now be known as the Dragonfly.

Xu had progressed through almost two months of heats to make it to the final and won a round trip to Hong Kong. He could also be the most relaxed barman in Shanghai, having also won for himself 5,000 yuan (US\$732.30) worth of massages and treatments from Dragonfly.

Second and third prize included a trip to Sanya in Hainan Province and Beijing respectively and a 3,000-yuan and 1,000-yuan card to Dragonfly.

The competition tested bartenders' skill under pressure, with a panel of judges scrutinizing their every move as they made their intricate creations within a five-minute time limit.

The winning drink was a three-layered cocktail with a mandarin jelly base, a lemongrass-infused vodka and coconut milk and it was topped with champagne and strawberry puree.

But it wasn't just what was in the glass that took Xu to the top, with barman being judged on their style, movement and hygiene.

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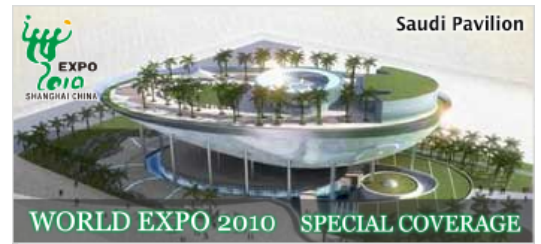
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Xu says he tried to make a cocktail that reflected the Dragonfly brand.

"I tried to make a fruity, fun cocktail that would help people relax," Xu says. "I know ladies like to go for a massage so I also wanted to make a drink women would like so it is light and has fresh flavors."

Dragonfly Vice President Randal Eastman says the competition was a fun way for the lifestyle brand to reach a segment of its target market.

"A segment of our customers are young and urban and like to go out and socialize, have a drink and make merry so this competition was a fun way to raise awareness of our brand," he says.

Founded in 2003 by Georgie Yam, Dragonfly has grown from one outlet in Shanghai to have spas in Beijing, Suzhou in Jiangsu Province, Hangzhou in Zhejiang Province and Qingdao in Shandong Province. It also has a floating retreat aboard the MS Yangtze Explorer that sails between Yichang in Hubei Province and Chongqing Municipality through the Three Gorges.

Dragonfly has also expanded globally with outlets in Oslo, Norway and Dubai in the United Arab Emirates.

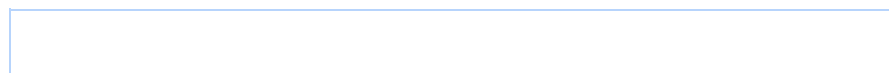


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