

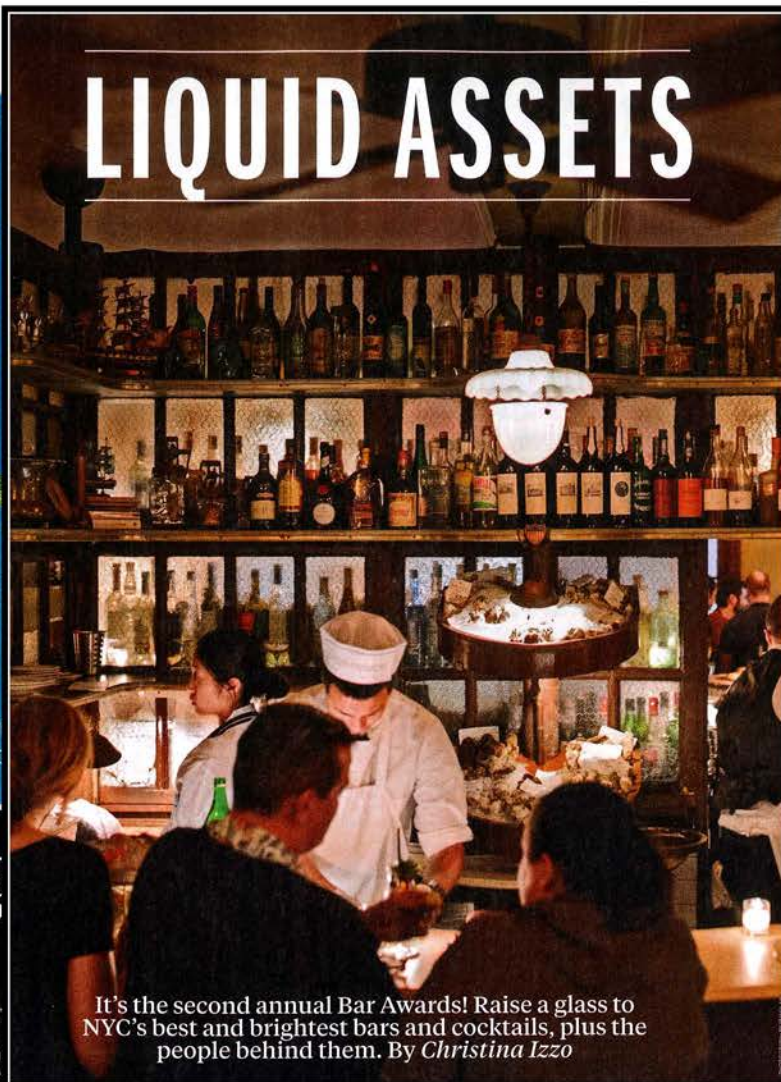
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It's the second annual Bar Awards! Raise a glass to NYC's best and brightest bars and cocktails, plus the people behind them. By *Christina Izzo*

WITH ALL DUE respect to everywhere else on the planet, New York is the cocktail capital of the world. After all, how can you argue when confronted with the sheer breadth and impeccable quality of the city's drinks scene? *Time Out New York* is honoring just that with our second annual Bar Awards, a recognition of the booze world's finest. To come up with a list of award categories and worthy candidates to fill them, we assembled a murderers' row of industry pros, from big-name drink slingers to trendsetting bar owners, who convened at Time Out HQ on March 22 to discuss everything from the death of the dive to the indispensability of a good barback. After rules were established—panelists could not nominate their own venues nor later vote in a category in which their bar was nominated—drinks were drunk and votes were cast, and our panelists zeroed in on the spectacular seven spots making our bar scene so fucking stupendous right now. (It was a tough job, but somebody had to do it.)

- BAR OF THE YEAR -
MAISON PREMIERE

YOU COULD PICK any year since 2011—when owners Joshua Boissy and Krystof Zizka brought their instant-classic brand of French Quarter charm and absinthe cocktails to Williamsburg—and Maison Premiere arguably would have deserved the title. But 2015 was a particularly standout one for the impeccably styled, sumptuously romantic Bedford Avenue boîte: It received its second consecutive James Beard Award nomination for Outstanding Bar Program and even took home the big prize.

And outstanding it is, having bumped up its inaugural eight cocktails to a rigorous, seasonally changing list of 28 over the years, not to mention having the city's largest absinthe archive (\$13 to \$18 per glass, served traditionally with a sugar cube and chilled water) and turning bartending upstarts like Beverage Director Maxwell Britten and Bar Manager William Elliot into bold-faced barroom names. The trademark horseshoe bar—anchoring a dreamily appointed stage set with multitier oyster towers, tableside martini service and a bronzed Napoleon statue perched atop the green-marble absinthe drip—has not only been a veritable breeding ground for talent (Nitecap's Natasha David, the Dead Rabbit's Jillian Vose), but it's also become the platonic ideal of what a Brooklyn drinks joint should be: a place where off-duty bar-industry types clink gorgeous sherry cobbler next to regulars downing Ram Island slurpers, where the folks behind the stick are as thoughtful and dapper as the drinks they're serving.

→ 298 Bedford Ave, Brooklyn (347-335-0446, maisonpremiere.com)

RUNNERS-UP: ATTABOY, THE LONG ISLAND BAR,
THE NOMAD BAR