

going out

Has Newbury Street MET its match?

► Combining upscale sensibility with casual cocktails and a ham-and-cheese bar, this Back Bay newbie has something for everybody



Opening a restaurant on Newbury Street is a daunting task. Aside from all of the entrenched competition, you've got to somehow balance the aspirational aura of the fashionable neighborhood with a concept that's popular enough to appeal to a broader clientele. MET Back Bay, the fourth offering from the group that includes the popular Metropolitan Club steakhouse in Chestnut Hill, aims to do that with its multi-tiered design. Upstairs, a formal dining room shares space with a clubby "library bar," while downstairs is geared toward a more casual crowd. "They are two different bars altogether, just in feel-

ing," explains bar manager Leo Neves. "The upstairs bar is more intimate, and quiet. The downstairs bar is more of a lively night-style kind of thing, geared toward volume."

That volume downstairs includes a ham-and-cheese bar, where patrons can get their share of sliced, artisanal, cured meats and cheeses.

Designing a cocktail program that encompasses the concept here called for casting a wide net.

If you go

► **MET Back Bay**
279 Dartmouth St., Boston
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www.metbackbay.com



ERIN BALDASSARI/METRO

"What I wanted to do was incorporate a little bit of everything," Neves says. "I like the elegance of classic spirits — Chartreuse, Kirschwasser and Bols Genever — but also things that people use in the kitchen on a regular basis."

That means you'll find small batch bottles, classically sophisticated liqueurs, a variety of bitters and plenty of brown spirits alongside popular-taste designs with a slight edge. A boring old pineapple infusion ups the ante by using grilled fruit instead, for example.

Others aren't designed for the serious cocktailer, but will be popular

nonetheless. That's the idea.

"We kind of want to appeal to everyone," Neves says. "If you want to stop in and get a beer, we have a great selection. Or if you're looking for a fruit martini, everything is very approachable. We appeal to all ages, which is great."

You pretty much have to on a street like this.

What he's having



"I'm really into the bourbons," Neves says. "I think the Hudson bourbons are very good, from the Hudson River Valley in New York. It's a small batch production, and they have a really nice body to it, a really nice complexity. I drink just that on the rocks, or maybe made into a Manhattan as well."

