

# W.G. of Chicago

October 2012 Whiskey Gentlemen Newsletter

## “Whiskey Flights and Movie Nights”

Rockit Burger Bar invites The Gents to partake in Wednesday’s feature event

The Whiskey Gentlemen of Chicago are a small group of whiskey enthusiasts who, a year ago, launched a [blog](#) with the objective of documenting our exploration into the world of whiskey.

We attend tastings, visit distilleries and patronize bars and restaurants in and around Chicagoland, growing our experience and knowledge of whiskey from production to consumption.

This month, we are pleased to mark our first anniversary by accepting an invitation to review [Rockit Burger Bar](#) on 3700 N. Clark in Wrigleyville.

We thank all of you who have read our blog and help us build a following on Twitter [@WGchicago](#). Stay tuned as we launch into another year of scouting across Chicago for more whiskey events!



### Selected Spirits



#### Hudson Collection

NY Corn  
Baby Bourbon  
Single Malt  
Manhattan Rye



#### Rye Collection

(rī)<sup>1</sup>  
Templeton  
Old Overholt  
Rittenhouse



#### Scotch Collection

Laphroaig  
Glenmorangie  
Macallan  
Balvenie



#### Mixed Drinks



#### Rockit Man



#### Craft Beers

### The Movie featured at

Rockit Burger Bar last Wednesday was Step-Brothers, a most excellent choice. Will Ferrell’s unrestrained comedic style is anything but subtle, and the movie’s plot is remarkably forgiving should a few minutes get missed along the way.

My point is that watching a movie for its finer details at a bar is absurd, but enjoying the subtleties of a glass of whiskey against the backdrop of a half-brained comedy is, on the other hand, a most novel

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**The menu** featured a handful of whiskey- and other liquor-based “Rocktails,” plus a host of specialty and standard brews. A separate menu on the wall listed a primarily Hudson bourbon menu (bottom-right image), which would soon be rotated for some alternate varieties. And, just in case we required more options, another smaller menu beckoned, listing a quadruple cluster of whiskey flights.

A full line-up of delicious-looking eats taunted my empty stomach. We took a few moments to look over the compelling menu offerings ranging from flatbread pizzas to weekend brunch options, salads, sides, and the (obligatory) freshly ground half-pound burgers.

Resisting the compulsion to order food immediately, we started with a couple rounds of drinks.



**The mixed** drinks revealed our server’s passion for preparing a well-balanced whiskey cocktail.

Mike first ordered the Brooklyn made with Templeton Rye, amaro, dry vermouth, maraschino liqueur and orange bitters. He noted it had an “interesting taste as a Manhattan. It’s almost like an aranchia with booze on steroids. As a fan of amaro I love the finishing tastes of this drink. Very nice blend of bitters and whiskey.”

His second mixer was a 4point, prepared with a base of Cherry Heering, Old Overholt Rye and a couple other ingredients. (This drink was not currently on the menu.) Mike notes, “Bold; a great ‘manly’

whiskey drink. Good balance, not sweet, but hits a good peak and after taste.”

Rick started off with the Whiskey Smash, a drink of Evan Williams Bourbon, lemon, mint and demerara syrup, angostura and orange bitters. “I thought it was a great, original drink because it is hard to make a drink that feels ‘refreshing’ with whiskey. This is easy to drink and perfect for summer time. It reminded me of a mojito or a margarita made with whiskey. The mint definitely gives it an ‘icy’ feel.”

Second in line for Rick was an Apple Manhattan, a blend of Makers Mark and apple liquor, plus freshly muddled apples and other ingredients. “Definitely a sweet, stronger drink. It feels like I’m drinking straight whiskey with a touch of sweetness and apple juice. I liked this drink and would drink it again, but I preferred the Whiskey Smash.”

I opted to try a couple off-menu beers offered by our server – Founder’s Breakfast Stout and New Holland’s Dragon’s Milk (stout). The Breakfast Stout (\$8) offered a heavy burst of coffee flavor along with the chocolate traces typical of stouts, and despite my expectations I enjoyed this one more than the Dragon’s Milk (\$10).

A flavorful beer with a smoky finish, the Dragon’s Milk is aged in bourbon barrels. But, to my disappointment, it did not intrigue me or have the creamy body I enjoy in certain other stouts. Both were pricey beers for 12 ounce bottles (I was forewarned), but I’m glad I tried them both.

idea! Entering the bar, we were promptly greeted and invited to head into the dining area. We filed past the taller tables up front, and as we rounded the corner, we wondered at the small cask perched conspicuously on the edge of the bar. (We agreed we should get a picture of the cask; yet, despite later sampling its contents, we all still failed to get the picture.) We proceeded through a doorway and entered the adjoining rectangular dining area.

A glowing halo of televisions ringed the top edge of the room, encircling roughly half a dozen booths along one wall and as many tables on the opposite wall. The audio was piped to speakers mounted between the TVs. A few more tables populated the center of the room, which is where we settled. I took note of the exposed brick and wood décor, a combination of earthy warm tones and rustic finishes that I find most appealing, particularly when I’m in a whiskey-drinking mood.

Our server introduced himself and explained Rockit’s specialty mixed bourbon drinks. He was a self-proclaimed bourbon enthusiast and had no trouble providing details about the history and variety of whiskey, both in general and about those we would be sampling.

We were in good hands!



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**The Mysterious** cask on the bar was out of sight, out of mind until our server graciously offered a sample of its contents. "It's called the Rockit Man," he announced, passing out shot glasses to each of us. "On the house."

A 3-month aged blend of Maker's Mark, fresh cherries and brandy, this drink is a signature offering of Rockit Ranch Productions locations. When the owner reopened the Wrigleyville location as Rockit Burger Bar on April 1 of this year, the cask retained its place.

The aroma and sweet-cherry flavor that enveloped a burst of alcohol heat reminded me of The Knot – except the Rockit Man tasted good.

Our server admitted using the drink to reel women into the world of whiskey. I'd concur that anyone whose palate is not tuned to the bite of straight whiskey could benefit from this primer.

Mike remarked that the drink smells like pie, adding he "would like to have a bottle of this for parties and gatherings as a unique shooter."

Rick also thought it was a great drink and perfect for sipping, while still being strong. "To me it tasted like a strong whiskey 'beer,' definitely better cold than at room temperature. I tasted more whiskey than brandy.

☞ "I give 5 stars for the concept and originality [of Rockit Man] and also for the Whiskey Smash and Apple Manhattan cocktails." ☞

**The Meat** was piled high on Rick's burger – the beef being only one of the layers. An unapologetic temptation, The Farmhouse is the first burger listed on the menu.



Atop the patty, pulled pork, applewood-smoked bacon and a fried egg complete the ensemble, which is severed beside a pile of curly fries.

Rick was content and said it was a great burger overall, and I was quite pleased with The Hottie, a handsome burger served with three jalapeño poppers crowning the patty.



I just love deliciousness piled on top of deliciousness!

Mike ordered The Locavore and was impressed that it was cooked exactly as requested: medium/medium rare.

"I loved the pretzel bread," Mike said. "It was a huge burger and huge portion of fries. Well worth the money and hit the spot."

“An unapologetic temptation, The Farmhouse is the first burger listed on the menu.”

True to its name, his burger was prepared with local beef raised in the Midwest, Goose Island beer battered onion rings, Nordic Creamery smoked cheese, and Nueske bacon aioli.

All of the burgers were above-average original creations worthy of their \$12 price point. I would happily go back to try some of the other burgers.

My only critique matched Mike's – the lights were dimmed a bit too far for eating. Our food was not impossible to see thanks to the illumination of the TVs, but a little extra light would have been ideal.

The volume of "Step-Brothers" was sufficient to hear every hilarious line. We were surprisingly unaffected by the din of the staff's activities or the crowd's conversations. The dining experience was enjoyable and filling!

**The Moment** we saw the flight menu, we each decided to order a different set to maximize our selection coverage. Rick's peat-tooth drew him directly to the **Scotch Collection**, and I expanded my horizons and opted for the **Rye Collection**. Mike has been on the bourbon trail so he selected the **Bourbon Collection**.

A mild point of contention ensued when we noticed different flight menus had inverted the top two selections of a couple Collections. We made it our challenge – a test of our tasting abilities and our memories of certain whiskeys – as we tried to determine which menu had the listing correct according to the order the whiskeys were presented.

I am convinced that **Templeton** appeared right-most on my paddle of

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ryes, despite claims that Mike's menu correctly listed the order with **(rī)**<sup>1</sup> (pronounced: "rye one") at the end. That glass contained a familiar bourbon-sweet smell and peppery finish, whereas the next glass in line was unfamiliar. I will



remain steadfast and declare it was the **(rī)**<sup>1</sup> because its less sweet, smooth character was new to me.

I compare not the flavor but the body of the drink to milk chocolate, if beefier ryes are the dark chocolates in this analogy. The **(rī)**<sup>1</sup> was subdued with shadows of flavors combining to make this a standout, unique rye.

Another surprise came with the **Old Overholt**, which presented me with a banana aroma. The **Rittenhouse** also smelled of fruit – unripe peach in this case – and had a bright, open start with a peppery finish.

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Rick's flight should look familiar to close readers of our blog. Three of the four pours from the Scotch Collection has previously been reviewed by us. The **Laphroaig** appeared in our first newsletter in [October 2011](#) and again in [April 2012](#). We attended a **Glenmorangie** tasting in [February 2012](#), and we enjoyed **Macallan** at our tapas night in [December 2011](#). The last whiskey in the collection was **Balvenie**, and while not reviewed in the past, I feel certain we've at least tasted it!

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Mike provided his insights on the Hudson Collection flight below:



**Manhattan Rye:** This thing had pepper all over it. Put it on a steak and eat it. Spicy! Joe said it has a brass "set." Very bitter with the water.

**Single Malt:** Best finish. A tiny bit sweet, easy end.

**NY Corn:** White whiskey. Scent very similar to sake, and much mellower than I anticipated.

Obviously no peated flavor – it's a clean taste, almost similar to a weak gin. I'd be really interested to taste this after aging it in a charred barrel.

**Baby Bourgon:** Lightly scented; fast peak with a basic finish. Nothing lingering. I did not enjoy it much after adding water, which created a bitter taste and finish.

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It is our hope that the quantity of whiskey in each pour is normally more generous, as ours were a tad shallow. However, as the Gentlemen guests of the establishment for the evening, our whiskey was complementary and we have no complaints! We were very grateful and pleased with Rockit Burger Bar for our October event!!