

World's Next Cocktail Capital

SHANGHAI'S NEW SPEAKEASIES SPECIALIZE IN SHOWMANSHIP—SECRET PASSAGEWAYS, RETRO THEMES—AND STELLAR DRINKS WITH ASIAN FLAVORS.

BY CRYSTYL MO

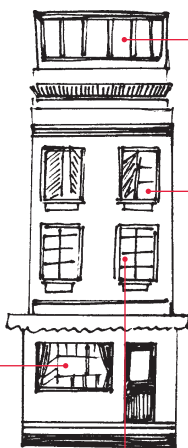
FLOOR 1



THE SECRET ENTRANCE Visitors to Speak Low must pass through Ocho, a shop that displays swizzle spoons and cocktail books alongside slushie machines dispensing piña coladas in paper cups.

Speak Low

Speak Low is a speakeasy on steroids, with hidden passageways connecting all four levels. Created by Shingo Gokan of New York City's pioneering Angel's Share, the place offers a different drinks experience on each floor. 579 Fuxing Zhong Rd.; 6416-0133.



FLOOR 3



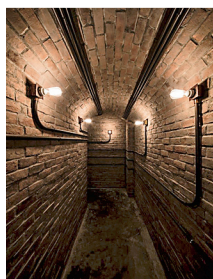
COMPLEX COCKTAILS

More serene than the space on the second floor, experts behind a copper-top bar make ambitious cocktails like the Speak Low, a matcha drink paired with dark chocolate slivers.



For third-floor access, find the map posted in a dead-end hallway and press Shanghai.

FLOOR 2



A bookcase at the back of Ocho slides open to reveal a secret brick passageway and stairs leading up.

SIMPLE COCKTAILS

The most casual, rowdy scene is on this floor. Customers crowd around the bar snacking on pickled eggs topped with aioli while friendly, aproned barkeeps mix twists on familiar cocktails, like an English Mule made with tea-infused gin.

FLOOR 4



Lockers store rare Japanese whiskeys and Scotch that belong to club members.

WHISKEY Past an "Employees Only" sign lies this exclusive bar outfitted with a 1920s organ. But just knowing where the entrance is won't get you in—you must be one of the 32 club members to enter.

More Masters of Shanghai Mixology



Starling ↑

This bar's palm-shaped ceiling fans and rum-centric drinks menu evoke the colonial era. The best cocktail is the spicy Tom Yum Colada, made with coconut milk, pineapple and lime juice. 99 Taixing Rd.; 6217-0189.

E.P.I.C.

Inspired by bars like New York City's The Dead Rabbit, two of Shanghai's star mixologists created this lounge in a 1930s townhouse. The duo usually work behind the bar on the second floor, where they will tailor a cocktail to your tastes; if you request a rum drink, you might see them burn star anise to fill a glass with aromatic smoke. 17 Gaoyou Rd.; 5411-1189.

El Ocho

Owned by a Spanish chef, this attic bar serves tapas and Asian-inflected cocktails. The Appeasement of Ching Dai is an homage to the film *Big Trouble in Little China*, with baijiu (a vodka-like Chinese spirit) and tart hawthorn-berry syrup. Zhong Plaza, 99 Taixing Rd.; 6256-3587.

Senator Saloon

A forerunner of Shanghai's craft-cocktail movement, Senator Saloon offers classic cocktails like the sidecar, matched with snacks like pork belly sliders with pickled cabbage. The red-velvet-lined space feels like it came straight out of 1920s Chicago. 98 Wuyuan Rd.; 5423-1330.

Tiki China

A monsoon wind has brought tiki culture to Shanghai; shrunken-head mugs and scorpion bowls are everywhere. The tiki-est of all is Tiki China, which serves tropical drinks and Polynesian-inspired snacks, like slow-roasted pork knuckle. Bldg. 22, Hengshan Fang, 320 Tianping Rd.; 6415-0363.

Union Trading Co.

No passwords are required to enter this Prohibition Era-style collaboration between two Chinese American expats. Yao Lu barrel-ages cocktails, while Austin Hu oversees the menu of comfort foods like s'mores cupcakes and meatballs glazed with Ikea's lingonberry jelly. 64 Fenyang Rd.; 6418-3077.



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EDITOR (LIZ SHELDON) IF
RUNNING IN TABLET!