



Photo: Rainbow Ranch Lodge

BRIGHT LIGHTS, BIG SKY

THE MANHATTAN COCKTAIL GETS A MONTANA MAKEOVER

BY ERICA DUECY

THE MONTANA SKY IS PART OF A RECENT TREND OF BARTENDERS AGING THEIR COCKTAILS IN CHARRED OAK BARRELS.

Prepping a Montana Sky from Buffalo Trace whiskey, Taylor Fladgate Tawny Port, and Angostura bitters.



Photos: Rainbow Ranch Lodge



Montana Sky

2 ounces Buffalo Trace bourbon
 ¾ ounce Taylor Fladgate 10-Year Tawny Port
 3 dashes Angostura bitters
 Garnish with brandied cherries

Mixing: In a wide-bottomed rocks glass, add bourbon, tawny port, and bitters. Stir. Add one oversized ice cube and garnish three brandied cherries. Enjoy.

Skiers don't come to Big Sky for shopping or nightlife; they come here for the epic terrain. After a long day traversing more than 220 ski runs on 5,532 acres at Big Sky Resort and neighboring Moonlight Basin, a little pampering may be in order. That's where Rainbow Ranch Lodge comes in.

The rustic luxe retreat on the Gallatin River is *the* place in Big Sky for a sophisticated dinner—and, perhaps unexpectedly, a cutting-edge cocktail. The signature libation? A barrel-aged Manhattan called the Montana Sky. The cocktail is made from Buffalo Trace whiskey, Taylor Fladgate Tawny Port (which replaces the standard sweet vermouth), and Angostura bitters.

Five gallons of the cocktail at a time are mixed and aged in used whiskey barrels from a local distillery. After six weeks, the cocktail is ready for its place as star of

the lodge's cocktail menu. Bartenders serve the drink in a wide-bottomed glass with one oversized ice cube and submerged, brandied cherries. "Guests just love it," says Mollie Eckman, general manager of Rainbow Ranch Lodge. "It's a great conversation piece."

The Montana Sky is part of a recent trend of bartenders aging their cocktails in charred oak barrels. The treatment infuses the drink with toasty vanilla flavors, and smoothes out rough edges, giving high-proof spirits a velvety mouth-feel.

Since the Montana Sky debuted at Rainbow Ranch Lodge two years ago, it has been the property's most popular cocktail. Fortunately for après-ski revelers in other locales, the Montana Sky is easy to make—and delicious even without the barrel-aging. For those added toasty accents, just drink it while lounging by the fire.

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