

# Hudson Valley

## Return to the Golden Era of Cocktails at Beacon's Wonderbar

The speakeasy-style bar shakes and stirs craft cocktails and small bites, right next door to Story Screen Theater.

Walking into **Wonderbar** means taking a step back in time.

Under the glow of the twinkling chandeliers, the Beacon cocktail bar revives the allure of the Roaring 20s. As passersby trickle onto the black-and-white checkered floor, they sidle up to the Carrara marble counter. Entranced by the old-school aura of the space, they slowly peruse the menu for just the right libation. Their eyes skim over one drink after the next until they finally latch onto *the one*. Looking up, they make eye contact with the bartender standing a few feet away. Smiling softly, they watch transfixed as their drink is shaken, stirred, and swirled to perfection and they can take that very first sip.



Sounds wonderful? It is Wonderbar, after all.

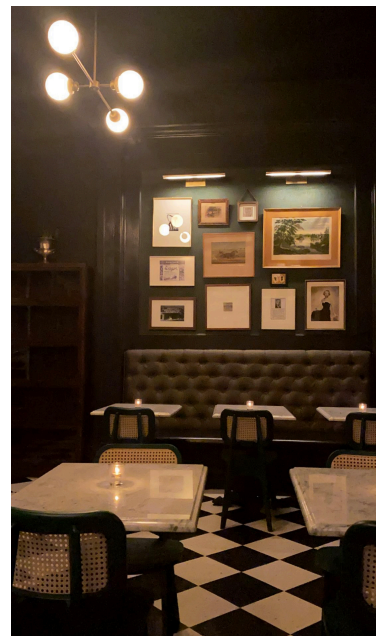
As many a Beaconite can attest, the Main Street cocktail spot was a long time coming. Its modern-day story begins back in 2015, when local developer Brendan McAlpine saved it and the adjoining **Story Screen Theater** from foreclosure. Yet its origins in the Hudson Valley far precede the current decade.

In fact, **Wonderbar's original incarnation** dates back to the gilded era of libations and lounge music in the Hudson Valley. During the '30s and '40s, the nightclub of the same name was a hub for singers and musicians. Up until it served its last drink in the 1950s, it was a popular spot for celebrations, first dates, and easy drinking in town.



Today, Wonderbar is just about the same as it once was. It took more than a little work to get there, though. After Story Screen Theater opened at the beginning of 2019, McAlpine and Wonderbar owner Marjorie Tarter rolled up their sleeves to renovate the space from the ground up. They removed a number of layers to get to the original plaster and make the most of the 800-square-foot space.

Paying meticulous attention to detail, they gave the bar priority by topping it with Carrara marble, which also tops the tables, and framing it with a mirror refurbished from a Union Square window on the wall. On the floors, striking black and white diamonds harmonize with tables anchored by cast-iron bases and Art Deco chairs. They tie in seamlessly with the antique brass accents on the lighting fixtures above. Across the walls, frames and mementos of old photos and reproductions of theater advertisements from the theater's heyday dot the space, acting as something of an interactive archive for bar-goers while they sip their libation of choice.



Wonderbar quietly tiptoed into its opening at the beginning of February 2020, one year after Story Screen's grand unveil. Since then, it quickly developed a local following as the place to be before (and after) catching a flick.

"We wanted to bring the idea of Wonderbar back to life but put our own touch on it," McAlpine explains. For him and Tarter, Wonderbar stands out amid the wealth of eateries in town because it's less a dedicated bar or restaurant and more a comfortable place to grab a bite or a drink with friends. It's not a speakeasy, per se, although it certainly has that same gilded aura of those under-the-radar giggle juice joints. Like **the speakeasies** of old, it embraces that "all are welcome" mentality as it invites locals and visitors alike to stop, rest their feet, and savor moments and conversations over handcrafted cocktails.



Speaking of cocktails, they're just as show-stopping as one might expect. Beverage directors Lynette Marrero, the founder of the Speed Rack cocktail competition, and Jessica Gonzalez, a Death & Co. alum, are the masterminds behind the drink menu, so it's no surprise that their concoctions prioritize house-made ingredients that run the gamut of flavor profiles. Drinks are inventive and range from the Shirley Temple-esque Singapore Sling c. 1915 Raffles Hotel (gin, cherry, pineapple, lime, Cointreau, and Benedictine) to the lightly spiced Man in the Seersucker Suit (rye, mezcal, cinnamon, Campari, lemon, and raspberry). For the wine-inclined, there's a pleasing medley of vino on deck, along with a handful of local beers for those who just really feel like brew.

During the COVID-19 crisis, Wonderbar keeps the cocktails coming with onsite dining and takeout on the weekends. Follow along on **Instagram** for menu updates every weekend.



On the edible end, Wonderbar focuses its menu on small, snackable plates. The pretzel crack and rooster rolls (can you say chicken, blue cheese, and spicy sauce?) are highly addictive starters, while the lobster roll chalupas with brown butter aioli hit all the right notes.

"People are loving the cocktails, loving the food, and [there's been] a really great reception to the concept in general," McAlpine enthuses, adding that the bar's popularity at the start inspired the theater to add more showtimes to accommodate visitors who come in for drinks and stay for a show.

"It's the best guest experience you can have from the moment to walk in to the moment you walk out," he says.

Sounds like the bee's knees, right?

**Wonderbar**  
445 Main St, Beacon