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RAISING THE BAR

## Mixing it up in Manalapan

### Five questions with Eau's new mixologist-in-chief

Posted: 12:01 a.m. Wednesday, July 9, 2014

By [Liz Balmaseda](#) - Palm Beach Post Food Editor

'I really felt like a child again tasting something yummy like ice cream for the first time.' Krystal Kinney, on her first taste of first-growth Bordeaux wine

Krystal Kinney's great beverage adventure winds through far-flung roads that don't always intersect. After all, the path of wine expertise does not usually connect with the avenues of modern-day cocktail mixing.

In a beverage world where specialty and ingredient focus is everything, there are die-hard wine lovers and there are "mixology" masters – in addition to the craft beer cognoscenti. And there's Kinney, a certified advanced sommelier who also happens to be a cocktail creator. She's the new beverage manager at the Eau Palm Beach, having arrived at the beachside resort (formerly the Ritz-Carlton) this spring.

She's wasted no time in shaking up the bar. At the resort's main bar, Stir lounge, she's added whiskey flights and speed wine tastings, tweaked the wine list and cocktail menu. (See one of her new, inspired sips in the adjacent recipe box.)

It was a sublime sip of Chateau Margaux that launched Kinney's great beverage adventure, one that has taken the Charleston, West Virginia, native to great wine regions from Napa to Alsace. Her love of French wines deepened while exploring France's top wine regions.

Before joining Eau, Kinney managed the Rustic Cellar wine bar in Boca Raton and worked at the prestigious Greenbrier resort in West Virginia.

We caught up with her last week via email and posed the following handful of questions.

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### **1. Are you finding that wine devotees are straying into mixology land more often?**

I know when I go out these days, I like to see what (bartenders) are mixing up and doing to push the boundaries. I also feel that it depends where you are in the world and what people may be eating or doing. All this being said, I do see more cocktails going down than just that glass of wine. Either way, I am happy!

### **2. What's your beverage of choice when you're indulging in a 5 o'clock sip?**

Usually sparkling wine of any type.

### **3. What made your fall in love with French wines? What's the best sip of wine you had in France and where did you enjoy it?**

As an American, I started out drinking what was familiar and easy to read in stores or restaurants. Later, after going to school and tasting more often, I was lucky enough to have a boss who had one of the best cellars in South Florida. I was introduced to first-growth Bordeaux and just fell in love from the first sip. The smell of patchouli, earth, and the round mouthfeel that seemed to never go away. I really felt like a child again tasting something yummy like ice cream for the first time. I always knew I loved French food and wine, however, I didn't know how much until spending time in the country drinking through the vineyards. The absolute best

sips of wine were in Burgundy at Chateau de Pommard. It was amazing because we stood in one vineyard drinking one wine while looking over at the Volnay vineyards, tasting the reds side by side and seeing how absolutely different they can be just footsteps away from each other.

**4. If you were competing in a mixed drink throwdown, what would be your secret ingredient and how would you use it?**

Infusion of teas and herbs. I think I would approach this the same way that I cook and eat. I like to use seasonal, fresh ingredients. Maybe some honeycomb because I eat that stuff right out of the jar. When naming cocktails, I usually go for my favorite song or descriptions used in blind wine tastings. Honeysuckle would be my cocktail because I loved those flowers growing up. Honey vodka, vanilla tea, fresh lemon juice, simple syrup, served on the rocks. Cheers!

**5. Okay, here's the obligatory deserted island question: If you were stranded on one and you could bring just one bottle, what would it be?**

Franciacorta, Monte Rossa, Sanseve' Saten, Brut. (An Italian sparkling wine.) Pure silk!

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**BLUEBERRY LAVENDER LUNATIC**

This recipe comes courtesy of Krystal Kinney, the new beverage manager at Eau Palm Beach who rims the cocktail glass with crystallized basil and lemon.

**Makes 1 drink**

1 lemon wedge

3 basil leaves

8 fresh blueberries

1 ounce lavender water

1 ounce honey syrup

2 ounces Leblon rum

1 ounce cranberry juice

In a cocktail shaker, combine all ingredients. Shake and pour into a martini glass. Garnish with a curl of lemon.

**EAU PALM BEACH**