



# OFF THE RECORD

## ALEX ROIG GOES ON THE RECORD ABOUT OFF THE RECORD

WRITTEN BY TEDDY DURGIN

**O**ff the Record has perhaps the best tag line of any bar in the nation's capital. "It's the place to be seen, but not heard." Situated in the basement of the landmark Hay-Adams Hotel, which itself is located on Lafayette Square with a clear view of the White House, Off the Record has long been a favorite upscale watering hole of Capitol Hill lobbyists and Washington, D.C., power brokers. And it's just the place to feature in our ongoing series of historic bars and restaurants.

Overseeing Off the Record is Alexander "Alex" Roig, Director of Food & Beverage for The Hay-Adams. During a recent interview with the Beverage Journal, he confirmed, "We get a lot of senators and representatives and politicians down there. We also get a lot of celebrities. Pretty much anyone you can think of has been to Off the Record! A lot of buzz starts around 3 p.m., and it will continue on and off all the way until 11:30 when it's last call. It doesn't matter if it's Tuesday. It doesn't matter if it's Sunday. It's cracking."

In addition to the clientele, Off the Record is known for its eye-popping red décor. Everything from the couches to the walls are some shade of red similar to the old Russian Tea Room in New York City. As for prime places to sit, have a drink, and share appetizers, Off the Record has a table behind the bar called "The Bench" surrounded by the Supreme Court Justices' caricatures. It's the most popular table in the place.

## The Bench

*"As for prime places to sit, have a drink, and share appetizers, Off the Record has a table behind the bar called "The Bench" surrounded by the Supreme Court Justices' caricatures. It's the most popular table in the place."*

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But the most popular feature is not the booths or the fancy bar or cool lighting. It's the caricatures that hang on the wall – caricatures that also are on full display on the bar's coasters. The stylized drawings of previous and current political figures were made by a trio of celebrated cartoonists: Kevin Kallagher of The Economist, Ann Telnaes of the Washington Post, and Politico's Matt Wuerker. Roig remarks, "Everybody goes to Off the Record for one of these coasters.

So often, we get people coming in who say, 'I've brought my friends, and we love these coasters!' It's become a real thing."

Roig is the real thing. As a younger man, he moved to the U.S. from Puerto Rico in search of the American Dream. He rose through the ranks in some of the finest eating and drinking places in Miami, New York, and Washington. He has been with The Hay-Adams since July 2021 after serving as Assistant Director of Food and Beverage at the

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**Alexander "Alex" Roig**  
*Director of Food & Beverage*  
The Hay-Adams

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Trump International Hotel Washington, D.C.

He said, "It became one of my passions to lead a team made up of the best of the best. What is unique at Off the Record is we try to create stories behind everything that we do. It's not just me creating a cocktail and saying, 'Alright, this is what we're going to put on the menu, and this is what you're going to do.' I involve staff. So that way, we are creating something that is unique to Off the Record. Our drinks tell a story about them

and about us. It's a way to engage with the guests, and the people enjoy that. So, when a guest asks, 'Why is this cocktail called The Martin?' The bartender can answer, 'Well, that's me. I'm Martin, and I created this cocktail because. . .'"

Roig also decided to retain the speakeasy allure of Off the Record. He stated, "I'm all about Prohibition. I focus on whiskeys and bourbons from that timeline, as well as known spirits that people enjoy. We do have a couple of cocktails that are staples. One is

the Pear Martini. About twelve years ago, one of our bartenders created this martini that has become one of the most favorite cocktails on the menu. When I first started, I almost removed it! But I had people literally tell me, 'You can't!'"

He continued, "I kid you not. You'll see that cocktail at every single table on our busy nights. Some other favorites include the Trumpy Sour and the A La Kamala. They're ones the bartenders have fun with. One that is really popular is called the Sena-





## The Caricatures

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tor's Secret. It's made with Old Forrester, which was the first bottled bourbon in the United States."

Off the Record has even found its way into pop culture at times. For instance, Hillary Clinton wrote a book called "State of Terror," and Off the Record was mentioned several times throughout. Factoids like that are what makes the bar's legend grow, and

the people keep coming. "It's incredible the amount of people who come to this property from groups to weddings to families," Roig marvels. "It's great to see all of them."

Looking ahead, Roig is philosophical about the challenges the nation's capital faces both as the center of government and as one of the nation's top hospitality markets. "I don't have a crystal ball," he conclud-

ed. "I don't know what is going to happen. This morning, I was on my way to work and listening to the news, and they were talking about big companies doing a lot of layoffs. It's all so unfortunate. But I can only control what I can control. I have to block all of the noise, all that's happening in the news and around the world, and just do my job." ■

