

LANTERN'S KEEP

- 49 West 44th Street, New York, NY 10036
- 212-435-4287
- www.iroquoisny.com/lanternskeep
- Open Monday to Friday 5 pm – midnight; Saturday 6 pm – 1 am
- Transport: B, D, F, M and 7 trains/42nd St – Bryant Park
- Moderate



The Iroquois Hotel's little secret

Open in the early 1900s, both the Algonquin and the Iroquois hotels exude the glamor of times past. Inside, the Algonquin has its famed Round Table restaurant, where Dorothy Parker gathered with editors of *Vanity Fair* and *The New Yorker*. But the Iroquois has a hidden little jewel box of a cocktail bar called Lantern's Keep. There's no sign for it, but in-the-know imbibers are aware that if the lantern affixed to the Iroquois's façade is lit, they can go inside and have a drink.

Lantern's Keep opened in 2011, but you wouldn't know it from the decor, which looks more like a Parisian Beaux-Arts salon than a New York bar. Chic black paneling contrasts with marble tables and Louis XIV chairs upholstered in powder blue velvet. Impressionist-style paintings of ballerinas adorn the walls. A fireplace adds a touch of elegance. In the corner, a tiny bar (the bartenders call it the cockpit) is equipped with everything needed to whip up craft cocktails.

The youthful head bartender John Ploeser came up through the ranks in his hometown of Madison, Wisconsin before moving to New York to join the opening staff of Perla in the West Village. There he met Theo Lieberman, then head bartender of Milk & Honey, who further trained him in the fine art of making classic cocktails. Along with Meaghan Dorman, Ploeser and his team designed the list of forty original cocktails, from the refreshing Regal Business (gin, grapefruit, honey, lime) to the boozy Double Barrel (rye, dry vermouth, sweet vermouth, angostura and orange bitters). Ploeser has a polite, Midwestern air that makes him instantly likeable and easy to talk to (an important quality in a bartender) and though he studied French literature, he loves the social aspect of bartending and feels at home behind the bar.

Much like the original Milk & Honey in Chinatown, Lantern's Keep is like a port of call in a cocktail wasteland. Though the neighborhood has some beautiful historic places, the New Yorkers who work in the surrounding banks and office buildings have few choices besides the ubiquitous Irish pubs and gems like Lantern's Keep, which are still few and far between. Since the bar opened, it has been a haven for post-work cocktails and a happy discovery for tourists staying at the hotel.

