

Sun downer er land

IT'S A BETTER WETTER IDEA

By Michael Persson • Photography by Marianne Groszko Lee

YOU'VE GOT TO HAND IT TO THOSE BRITS.

Their invention of the sundowner was a genius way to stylishly legitimize the act of grabbing a well-earned gargle after work. Back when the British Empire covered a quarter of the Earth's land area, and work was the prescription for everything that ailed you, the sundowner was the no-nonsense, fru-fru-less quaff designed to slake the thirst and empty the mind of the travails of bringing the natives to heel.



Much has happened since those days, the Empire has gone the way of ice left at the bottom of the glass and the sundowner is, world over, part of every respectable boozier's repertoire.

Originally, sundowners were whiskey and gin: two liquors that either contributed to the rise of the Empire, or accelerated its decline. Nevertheless, today's choices are wider than before with two exceptions: wine and beer. Neither qualify. The sundowner moniker belong to deeper, more complex quenchers: mint julep, Cuba libre, Lime Rickey, Moscow Mule, Singapore Sling and most popular of all, the Sundowner. Of course, there is Scotch and soda, brandy and soda and gin and tonic, but they hearken back to a serious time when work and pleasure were performed with the same dour accountability. That's not to say today's iterations involve umbrellas, curly straws or Jayne Mansfield-shaped stemware. Sundowners are not cocktails. They are intimate: a communion between the drinker and the drink and the beautiful surroundings made all the more so because of that all-important view. In and around Newport County there are several. Here are just a few...

Depending on your point of view, sunsets are either improved by the quality of your drink, or sullied. At the Safari Room, the sunset experience will be every bit as deep as the rich caramel browns and ochre hues of your rum-based sundowner. This place of comfort and joy must be Newport's saving grace to its rum-drinking history, offering more than 15 varieties lining the shelves. As the light pours in, glistening off the wooden bar, as the music moves



through the various genres played throughout the rum-producing countries of the Western Hemisphere, and the Horsehead-Marbella estate prominently in view across Narragansett Bay, the feeling that you may have dropped a few latitudinal lines to some Hemmingwayesque taberna is as palpable as the cold Pyrat. XO reserve slipping down your throat. Here, the stemware is meant for sundowners. A classic no-nonsense rocks glass that widens at the rim. What says "welcome" better than an open mouth? As for all practitioners of the sundowner, it's an opinion best kept between you and your drink.

THE SAFARI ROOM AT OCEANCLIFF
newportexperience.com



To the sound of swing jazz wafting outwards from within and the plummeting sun threatening to extinguish itself in Mount Hope Bay, a scene such as this needs more than Nature's cooling metaphor – it requires a sundowner. And I don't mean the common definition. What I mean is one and a half ounces of coconut rum, five ounces pineapple juice, two dashes of Angostura bitters and plenty of ice. That's a Sundowner. The drink in your hand now matches the 7pm sky and the beads of moisture forming on the glass show why drinks of this kind were invented for the tropics. Summer in these temperate environs may not quite be what Rudyard Kipling had in mind when penning his poem *Mandalay*. "Ship me somewhere east of Suez...an' a man can raise a thirst." From the Boat House deck, plopped down in an easy chair and with all five senses in tantric self-indulgence, east of Suez can find someone else to make hot. At establishments such as this, exists an appreciation for the working stiff looking for the quaff to fit the moment. Head bartender Jason Kindness (an excellent name for a man in his profession) has a number of house sundowners. His most renowned: the Suarez Cocktail. Sip it at the same speed as the waning sun and finish the day together.

BOAT HOUSE
boathouseiverton.com





Parking oneself along the bar at The Grill, a smartly dressed server will present a drink menu. A little advice: you'd do well to read it. If like me, your idea of a perfect sundowner consists of gin and tonic, then you'll appreciate this counsel. Try the Green Tea and Ginger: Hendrick's gin, ginger liquor and freshly brewed green tea. It's as if the gin and tonic was propelled into a futuristic nightclub, remixed and returned to 2011. To the hip biorhythmic pulses of Worldbeat, this sundowner is part of the orchestra of effects that enliven your zeal for life after a hard day. Yes, a single drink in this kind of place will make the Excel spreadsheet you've been poring over go bye-bye and your Inbox magically empty itself. For eye candy a collection of classic boats nod up and down as if agreeing with all your inner troubles. And if this anthropomorphic endeavor isn't enough, return to the tall, gingery sundowner, while admiring the neat décor (here, perfectly shaped stones keep table linens from disruptive winds...very zen) from your shi-shi lounge chair, feeling that the marina which practically surrounds you could very well be your private seaside salon. In the distance, a deckhand busies himself hosing down his vessel, *Blue Moon*: a name you shouldn't associate with your next visit.

THE GRILL AT FORTY 1° NORTH
41north.com



When the view consists of yawing sailboats tacking for all they're worth and a bridge piercing the distance, searching the horizon for meaning is as pointless as navel staring. There is only one thought worth thinking: quintessential Newport is right here? At Pineapple's on the Bay, it is this panorama that should in no way be given over to the Kodak moment, since beauty isn't one dimensional, glossy, or matte, that's for cocktail drinkers. For the sundownerist, it is enough just being there. Let your bartender do the work. Ask them for a sundowner of their choosing. Why not? Let go. At sunset, Jay, the bartender, shoots a cannon while staff bring champagne to customers for a toast. As the boom fades, Ray Charles takes over with his festive tribute to the tumeric sky, now empty of the sun. "America" is the perfect song to conjure the image of other hard working people from sea to shining sea all taking their dusk drink in hand, pursing their lips and thinking, "cheers."

PINEAPPLE'S ON THE BAY AT HYATT REGENCY NEWPORT
newport.hyatt.com



**MORE
SUNDOWNER
SPOTS**

TOP OF NEWPORT AT HOTEL VIKING
hotelviking.com

CASTLEHILL INN
castlehillinn.com

THE CHANLER AT CLIFF WALK
thechanler.com

THE NEWPORT OFFICERS' CLUB
(Members only, or by invitation)

AT THE DECK
waiteswharf.com

CARNEGIE ABBEY CLUB
carnegienewport.com
(Members only, or by invitation)

THE PIER
pierrestaurantnewport.com

MARINA GRILLE
 841-0999

Newport Mansions Stores

MARIPOSA
 We Have a Gift for Entertaining

*Elegant Handcrafted Serveware & Giftware
 Inspired by the America's Cup.*

Available at Newport Mansions Stores
 at The Breakers, The Elms, Marble House & Bannister's Wharf

Visit our new web store *NewportStyle.net*



With the day's end sinking fast and that calm closing out the fray of the work day, with sail boats bobbing gently somewhere over there, specificity seems like all too much work, because in the grand scheme of things, who cares where "there" is, here is where it counts. At the Lobster Pot – Bristol's version of the South Rim of the Grand Canyon-the view says what you're too tired to. From the terrace, the water practically at eye-level and no more than a few feet away, the expectation of that sundowner plays on the mind as madly as the light dances on the water. When it arrives, a cold sensation immediately strikes the hand as the glass is hoisted and sipped. Then the refreshing chill ... comparable to getting up and diving in.

To the right, the silhouetted tree line of Poppasquash Point, frames the water and becomes the perfect backdrop on which the sunlit sails of competing sailboats glow. It's a magical time. This little oasis may be just off route 114, but it's the clinking of ice in your expertly made Lime Rickey and the rigging slapping the mast in the distance that inhabit the audible void. Here, the sundowner isn't solace for another day of toil brought to an end, it is a sun salutation, a thanks followed by bottoms up and a well-earned thirst quickly dispatched.

THE LOBSTER POT

lobsterpotri.com