



IT'S ALL ABOUT & FRIENDS, FAMILY, COCKTAILS

By Terri Marshall

Growing up in the town of Lund, located in the southern tip of Sweden, Daniel Undhammar, vice president of sales for Edgewater Spirits, entered the hospitality industry at an early age. As owners of a local hotel, his parents enlisted help from the entire family to keep things running smoothly. Working before and after school, weekends, and holidays, Undhammar did a bit of everything from making the beds to cleaning the showers and trimming the hedges. Eventually, he became part of the kitchen help, scrubbing pots and pans, prepping and making sauces, moules marinières, bussing, and serving.

On one fateful day, someone needed help in service with a request for cocktails. So, he donned a suit and a little bow tie and began interacting with customers. When four American guests ordered a round of Manhattans, Undhammar smiled and said, "Sure, no problem." Having never made a cocktail in his life, he scurried into the kitchen and pulled a bar book from the spirits cupboard. Locating a Manhattan recipe, he mixed the drinks, added a garnish and delivered the cocktails with a confident smile. As he walked away, one of the guests said, "These are delicious, thank you Daniel." When they ordered a second round, he was hooked. "I think I caught a bit of a bug," Undhammar recalls.

Decades later, the spirit community is where he feels most at home. His path led him to London, where he worked every shift he could as a bartender then later as bar manager. At one point, he became a bar owner, which led him into the world of brand development. Undhammar had the good fortune to travel the world, shaking cocktails and teaching and inspiring young bartenders.


Today in his role with Edgewater Spirits, he works tirelessly building and promoting the company's brands, including Wódka Vodka and Harleston Green Scotch. Bartender favorites, these spirits were primarily based in the on-premise business. The COVID punch of 2020 required his company to pivot more towards retail to ensure survival. "Retail has always been extremely important," explains Undhammar. "Since 2020, when the nucleus shifted considerably, we had to shift more of our business to retail. But, where the lights were still on in bars and restaurants, we were there to supply and support."

The support reached beyond stocking the bars. Referring to colleagues in the industry as "friends and family," Undhammar stepped up to take care of his own. "We loaded up 25 pounds of minced meat, marinara sauce, garlic, onions, and pasta for our bartender friends and dropped it off at The Hub—a favorite downtown Tampa dive bar of industry workers."

Meanwhile, he had a business to run and keeping the brand momentum going required creativity. "Sometimes you have to swim at night when the other fish are sleeping," says Undhammar. All that night swimming seems to be working, stemming back to an old work ethic of working harder and longer than most. "On-premise has been the hero for our brands for a long time—it will always be. But retail is also very important because it enables us to reinvest into the on-premise businesses to help our cocktail friends and family. The wider we cast our nets, the more opportunities we find."

Casting that net in a few new directions has contributed to the brands' continued success. "We're starting to do cocktail classes with industry figures offering support with our brands."

Edgewater Spirits has teamed up with Shaker & Spoon, a monthly subscription service in another fun collaboration. The brainchild of Anna Gorovoy, Mike Milyavsky, and Danny Ronen, Shaker & Spoon boxes arrive with everything you need (except the alcohol) to create the cocktails of the month: original recipes, house-made syrups, bitters, garnishes, and more, plus an online video guide. Each Shaker & Spoon box calls for a specific spirit to mix up that month's cocktails. April's box is Steeped in Vodka 2, and Chelsea Santos, one

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of the featured bartenders, recommended Wódka Vodka. The box comes with enough ingredients for 12 cocktails which pairs perfectly with a 750 ml bottle.