

Adult entertainment

For an unsung alternative to the so-hip-it-hurts scene, check out the city's most sophisticated hotel bars.

The hottest hotel bars—places like Americano and Cortez—continue to pull in a crowd that enjoys a lively night on the town and getting tipsy on \$11 premium vodka cocktails. But some of the city's best hotel bars, though off the radar compared to bridge-and-tunnel watering holes like the Cliff's Redwood Room, offer quieter pleasures. Serene and refined, these are places to wind down and carry on a civilized conversation instead of shouting at your companion over a lite-house sound track.

Urbane cocktailers head to the classy bar at the 82-year-old Big 4 in the Huntington Hotel, a clubby perch on Nob Hill. The tall, stained-oak doors are a portal into another era, one of gentility and old-school San Francisco money. Along with the cozy fireplace, the well-crafted cocktails warm patrons right up, and the complimentary canapés like mini crab cakes and smoked salmon on focaccia don't hurt. Civilized drinking, indeed.

BY MARCIA GAGLIARDI

PHOTOGRAPH BY THOMAS HAWK



Big 4 10:48 p.m.

THE SCENE

Swillers grab a seat at the bar or settle in at lounge tables for an intimate tête-à-tête.

THE CROWD

A mixed bag of business types, plus Nob Hill doyens and younger folks pretending to have a pedigree.

THE SAUCE

Classics like martinis and Maker's Manhattans.

THE SOUND TRACK

The classy in-house pianist plays Sinatra and Cole Porter.

THE SCANDAL

The men's bathroom has a prostitution map of San Francisco from the 1800s, showing the different types of ladies of the night available across the city.

EAVESDROPPING

"If you won't tell me who else you're meeting with on your business trip, I'll have to keep buying you drinks to get it out of you."

1075 CALIFORNIA ST., S.F.,
415-771-1140

Elsewhere

Romantics swirl wine while nibbling on cheese and charcuterie at the **Hidden Vine**, a cozy, candlelit hideaway in the Fitzgerald Hotel. ½ COSMO PL., S.F., 415-674-3567.

Downtowners and Westfield shoppers unwind at **Seasons** in the Four Seasons. Draws include the view, the posh surroundings, and Michael Udelson, the piano player with a fondness for Coldplay. 757 MARKET ST., S.F., 415-633-3838.

Insiders adore the library-meets-bohemian-salon atmosphere of **Café Andrée** at the Hotel Rex. It's a prime spot for first dates and after-work chatter. 562 SUTTER ST., S.F., 415-433-4434.