**
*MANY BOOKS BLOG* **<http://manybooks.net/featured-authors/denitta-ward-jazz-secrets-and-illegal-alcohol>

 **1. Please give us a short introduction to what *Prohibition Cocktails* is about?**

*Prohibition Cocktails* captures the history of a time when alcohol was banned in America and the history and recipes of 21 of the most popular Roaring '20s cocktails from the Mary Pickford and Bee's Knees to the Monkey Gland. It is a companion to *Somewhere Still*, a novel of love, betrayal, and redemption set in the Roaring '20s -when the rules were clear & made to be broken - amid scandal and social change.

 **2. What inspired you to write a cocktail book with recipes from the prohibition era?**

The Prohibition era was a time of opulence and abundance, at a time of great division and separation. Cities were alive with jazz clubs, speakeasies, and a burgeoning Prohibition bootleg trade, and social mores were just starting to bend and break. Women had just gotten the right to vote and were advocating for social change, the economy was booming and slowly issues of equity were emerging. At the same time, otherwise law-abiding citizens were choosing to flout federal law. That gave me pause and I started researching speakeasies and the cocktail culture it created. Each cocktail has its own fascinating history and secrets. *Prohibition Cocktails* captures the origin story of each cocktail along with its history and great photos of each drink, properly made.

**3. Why historical fiction? What drew you to the genre?**

My novels are all set at a time when social rules are in flux. Catching societies at that point of change reveals great tension between what young people --and I focus on young women -- are raised to believe, do and say, and what the emerging social, cultural, and economic rules push them to do. We have so much to learn from history. As one of the first reviewers commented about Somewhere Still, "Wow, #metoo didn't start in 2017, did it?" and I hope my writing helps capture a fleeting time and place, and remind us that every generation faces similar challenges.

 **4. How much research did *Prohibition Cocktails* require from you and what was the most interesting aspect of your research?**
Tracking down the history of each cocktail and its original recipe was a challenge. I am grateful for both the internet and old bartending manuals. Going back to original source documents is thrilling for me. I learned that most cocktails have a disputed origin story, though some -like the Monkey Gland - are so shocking and unique their origin is absolutely undisputed. Did you know there was a physician in the Roaring '20s who came up with his own idea of Viagra? It involved implantation of a certain part of a male monkey. Stunning. And then a bartender decided that unique story needed to be forever memorialized with its own cocktail, the Monkey Gland. It's quite delicious and pretty in fact, with a beautiful orange round garnish.

**5. In which way is this a companion to *Somewhere Still*?**

Reading historical fiction is one thing, but learning about the historical realities of a time period is quite another. I set *Somewhere Still* in the Roaring '20s and you get the flavor of the luxury of the era, and when you read *Prohibition Cocktails* you'll learn the historical truth about Prohibition, rum-running, and speakeasies, how the laws and law enforcement worked and how it was all subverted -- along with all of the history and recipes of each of the most popular drinks of that day. As we approach the 100th anniversary of Prohibition, the book felt timely, too. And it launches on National Cocktail Day, Saturday, March 24th!

**6. Besides writing, what other secret skills do you have?**
In my day job, I support world-changing research at the University of Colorado Boulder as Assistant Vice Chancellor for Research so my super power is being a university administrator. In my private life, I have an uncanny ability to make lemon squares and chocolate mousse vanish. Into thin air.

**7. What fascinates you about the Roaring Twenties?**

The Twenties were the first time an absolute youth-culture took hold in America. Traditional values and mores took a backseat to fast jazz music, dancing, short dresses, sporty cars, short hair for women, and a whole vocabulary of slang. And even though Prohibition laws had gained enough popular support to the U.S. populating voting to ban booze, drinking was still a socially accepted norm. Everyday people lived with blatant contradictions between their public values and their private behavior, which -as a writer - makes for an enticing setting for a novel.
 **8. The book contains some secrets from the era - can you name one that you found particularly interesting?**

In researching this book, I learned that Green Chartreuse, a French liqueur used in cocktails, is made under absolutely strict secrecy and has been for 934 years. Only two French monks are allowed to see the ancient manuscript that holds the recipe and only those two know the 130 plants used, which plants require maceration, and how the plants must be blended and distilled. Those two lone monks own the process from the plants to the mixing to the casking of the liqueur and its storage in the largest cellar in the world in Voiron, France. Who knew? I now want to go for a tour of the Chartreuse Cellar, which they have!

**9. When you're writing, do you start with ideas of the characters or with the time period?**

The time period starts a novel for me. I have to fall in love with the era and research it well before the story develops. I read countless Kansas City 1920s newspapers and dozens of Ladies Home Journals from the 1920s for *Somewhere Still*. After I get a flavor of the location and time period, then the characters start to inhabit the place and the story develops. My next novel is set in Cuba in the days before the revolution. It was a challenge to find English newspapers and magazines so I also turned to history books and film more so.

**10. You wrote *Somewhere Still* as a gift to your mother. Tell us more about it.**
*Somewhere Still* was inspired by my mother. We were on her porch one afternoon talking about her grandmother, my great-grandma, who was a flapper in the '20s. Intrigued, I started researching the era and the location, Kansas City - which is known as Paris on the Plains. As I learned about what was going on in the city in 1921 and what the society ladies were up to, the story just blossomed. I wrote the first draft, tied a ribbon around it and gave it to my mother for Mother's Day. I thought that would be the end of that but she read it and declared it needed to be published. I took that to be motherly praise, but she encouraged me to find an agent. I wrote a few query letters and landed a wonderful agent, Elaine Spencer of the Knight Agency. She fell in love with the story as much as my mother had --- and together we brought it to life.
 **11. Do you have any interesting writing habits? Favorite writing spot, time of day to write?**
I do. I write my books longhand. Pen and journal. The really old-fashioned way of writing a novel. When I type up the handwritten work, that becomes my first edit. I started writing that way because I work full-time and had to capture those stolen moments -- like when I was waiting to pick the kids up from boy scouts or gymnastics, or sitting in a waiting room. For me, the act of writing longhand spawns creative thinking in a way that typing words just doesn't. Maybe other writers do this, but I haven't heard of any.
 **12. What are you working on right now?**
I'm deep into edits of my next book, *Somewhere Else*. *Somewhere Else* is written but is at the "pull it apart and put it back together" stage. l love the story and the sense of time and place. Havana in 1957 was a hotbed of decadence and intrigue and in many ways the city embodied values that were at odds with the rest of Cuban culture. Capturing that and the tension it created is rewarding. Here's a quick peek: *Somewhere Else* is the story of when innocent and naive becomes courageous and strong. Escaping the brutality of Revolutionary forces and finding refuge in Havana is Isabella Rodriguez’s only hope for survival.  Sent by her village priest to serve as a governess for the elite Romero family's three innocent children, Izzie finds a perfect sanctuary but when Izzie is cast out in a hasty and jealous rage by the very woman she came to serve, she finds herself alone and desperate. As Castro’s forces approach, the threat of danger intensifies. Encountering a seductive American, Thomas Henderson, just might be the salvation Izzie craves.  But Thomas' own secrets threaten to destroy everything.  With the revolution escalating and Thomas disappearing, Izzie seeks refuge in her faith and learns that nothing is as it seems.  She must do all that she can to survive and save the innocent Romero children from a devastating fate.  In a world of danger and mistrust, can Izzie find safety, love, and happiness anywhere?

 **13. Where can our readers discover more of your work or interact with you?**
The best thing ever is to hear from readers. I'm active on Facebook and you can find me, my sweet Belgian shepherd, and the beautiful Rocky Mountains on my Instagram account. Here are my links:

Webpage: <https://www.denitta.com>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/DenittaWrites/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/denittaward>

Instagram: <https://instagram.com/denittaward>

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