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Shaken not Stirred – The Evolution of the Cocktail Shaker

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Introduction

Instantly recognisable and universally appreciated the cocktail shaker stands aloft as the single most iconic piece of drinks mixing equipment to be ever created in the world of cocktail making. From its humble beginning which can be traced back to 7000BC in South America in individual containers right up to the 1800s when it was widely used by innkeepers who noticed that by sealing two different sized containers together to mix drinks helped to create a show for customers. The three main variations of the commercial cocktail shaker on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean came to be known as the Boston Shaker, the Cobbler Shaker and the French Shaker.

This paper explores the historical background and evolution of the cocktail shaker from it’s golden era of the 1930s when they reached their height in popularity favoured by the major American industrial designers to the push button battery powered era of the 1950s and 60s when they were forced into retirement to it’s re-birth within the cocktail renaissance period of the late 1990s into 2010. Cocktail shakers universal popularity have lead them to appear in many films, in recent years they have experienced a worldwide revival as customers are learning to love and appreciate complex, richly flavoured mixed drinks. Vintage shakers are also now eminently collectible, their beauty and unique design is sought after around the whole world, these collectors items are valued at thousands of pounds.

1. Individual Tins to Combination Shakers

1.1 7000BC – 1800s

Miller, Vandrome & McBrewster (2010) suggests that the cocktail can be traced to 7000 BC in South America, where the jar gourd was used as a closed container, adding that Egyptians as long ago as 3500 BC discovered that by adding spices to their grain fermentation concoctions before serving it actually made them more palatable (p. 8). Khachadourian (2003) argues that although Egyptians have been attributed with some of the most important developments in history he maintains that archaeologists of the modern day are yet to find hieroglyphic evidence that details a list of cocktail recipes inside any of the Great Pyramids. Although these early mentions offer some initial insights into the mixing and flavouring of fermentable beverages, we don’t see many references within the literature dating from 3500BC up until the 1500s. Calabrese (1997) indicates that in 1520 the Conquistador and

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explorer Hernando Cortez famous for conquering the Aztec empire wrote to King Charles V of Spain from the New World of ‘a particular drink made from cacao amongst other ingredients, served frothy and foaming from a golden cylinder-shaped container’ (p. 44). In the period leading up to the 1800s some of the World’s most famous mixed drinks are created which include Punches (1655 in Jamaica), Toddy’s (1721 in Edinburgh Scotland), Mint Julep (1787 in Virginia America), Collins (1790 – 1817 in England), Slings (1800s), Coolers (1825 in England), Crusta’s (1840-1850s in New Orleans America), Sours and Fizzes (1850s), Cobblers (1850s in America), Daises (1860s), Highball (1895 in New York), Rickey’s (1893 in Washington, America).

Brown & Miller (2009) propose that in this period the word ‘cocktail’ is in common use highlighting in *The Morning Post and Gazer* a London newspaper, England on March 20, 1798 recalling debts owed to a bar, one of which is ‘cocktails’. Haigh (2009) contends that the first definition of a cocktail appears in *The Balance and Columbian Repository* an American periodical magazine published in New York 13th May 1806 ‘ (p. 17). In the period of the 1800s cocktails were consumed as morning drinks containing medicinal bitters, not pleasant to drink hence the reference ‘bittered sling’ in 1806 publication of the Balance (p. 17). Haigh (2009) adds that cocktails ‘were your wake up call – like a rooster heralding the early morning light’, he adds that in these times if you consumed a cocktail , you were a little dangerous ‘ a bad boy’ (p. 18) .

Two novels in this period give us a significant insight into the equipment used. The 1852 novel *The Upper Ten Thousand* written by Charles Astor Bristead refers to glassware as being the primary piece of cocktail shaker equipment ‘shook the cobbler back and forwards from one glass to the other a dozen times without spilling a drop’ (Bristead, 1852, pp. 41-50). *Quadroon* a novel written by Mayne Reid in 1856 refers to a Mississippi riverboat bartender making a Julep, the ingredients oscillated between the glasses which were at no time approached nearer than two feet for each other (Reid, 1856). Although glassware was in wide use Wondrich (2007) refers to the period between 1783-1830 ‘The Archaic Age’ as the formative years of American mixology were the ‘tools were few, the recipes simple, the ingredients robust and the mixology rough and ready’ (p. 37). Although most bartenders were using beer mugs as mixing glasses in this period to prepare the most popular recipes of the day, Wondrich (2007) contends that some tavern keepers did invest in proper

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mixing equipment. Calabrese (1997) agrees and adds that in this period the cocktail shaker as we know it today was in wide use, invented by an innkeeper who, while using two containers to pour drinks back and forth between, noticed that one container’s mouth was smaller than the other’s and held the two together and shook them to create a show (p. 44). When he had the alcohol in the containers with them together, he noticed that the liquid did not drip, and stayed right where it was. He apparently had told people that he had just been shaking the drink in the containers for a bit of show, with that show, the modern shaker was born.

Doxat (1979) indicates in his copy (the 1900 edition) of the *Bartenders Manual* which was originally published in 1882 by the American Harry Johnson that ‘Johnson’s illustrations show an ice-filled bar glass with an inverted metal cone’ (p. 23) which is the precursor to the modern Boston shaker. Another major event occurred in the 1800s which changed everything Jerry Thomas did something no American or International bartender had ever done before, he authored the first bartender’s guide ever published entitled ‘*The Bon Vivant’s Guide or How to Mix Drinks*’ in 1862 (Wondrich, 2007, p.29). Throughout the 1800s barkeepers had tended to regard their recipes as trade secrets not to be exposed but Jerry Thomas broke that mould. Doxat (1979) proposes that this publication was probably the first ‘true cocktail book’ (p. 22), he adds that Jerry Thomas when seeking recipes for this publication ‘toured Europe with one thousand pounds worth of sterling silver cups and utensils’ (p.22). Doxat (1979) contends that Jerry Thomas did not refer to these cups as a cocktail shaker; he did however use them with ‘bar glasses’.

1.2 The Influence of Ice – the marvel of the age

Ice became commercially available in 1800 in the USA in the form of slabs hacked from frozen lakes (Jones, 1984); in 1803 Thomas Moore originally from Waterford, Ireland patented the term ‘refrigerator’ (Souders, 2012). Two years later, Oliver Evans designed the first closed circuit refrigerating machine, which was then patented another four years later by his colleague Jacob Perkins (Elert, 2012). From 1800 up until 1830 ice drinks were available only for the few but Wondrich (2007) contends that in the 1830s with the ‘burgeoning trade in fresh, clean New England ice, delivered by horse-drawn carts from insulated central warehouses even in the hottest months of the year, ordinary people started getting used to ice, expecting it and calling for it in their drinks’ (p. 40). Ice was ‘the marvel of the age’ combined with

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the drinks of the day it transformed the bartenders work (p. 40). The earliest mention of anyone chilling the glass the drink is strained into – necessary if you’re not shaking it in the glass in which it will be served – comes in 1883 from a Kansas City bartender, who describes a procedures involving ‘putting out a whiskey glass full of ice water, setting an empty glass on top of it, and then turning the water from one to the other’. (Wondrich, 2007)

1.3 The Drive to Improve the Cocktail Shaker

In the early 1800s the shaker as it came to be know went by several names, Jerry Thomas cited in (Wondrich, 2007) noted that ‘every well ordered bar has a tin egg-nogg ‘shaker’ and it is a great aid in mixing this beverage’ (p. 43). In this period the elegantly simple shaker-glass strainer combination fell victim to the American thirst for progress from 1870s there were numerous attempts to improve things (p. 46). The early cocktail shakers which were usually silver plated inside and cupronickel , brass, copper or even silver outside and offered in 5, 6, 7 niches height were deemed to be too simple and not effective enough to escape the American’s need to innovate (Haigh, 2009; Wondrich , 2007). Stainless steel didn’t appear on the scene until the 1920s (Rainwater & Redfield, 1998).

The US Patent Office records reveal an application for a patent for ‘improvements in apparatus for mixing drinks’ which was approved in 1872. The hermaphrodite shaker strainer titled Miller Patent Shaker and Strainer patented in 1882, is one of the more benign results (offered in plain tin or nickel plated for 50c and 90c respectively (Wondrich, 2007). The US patent history records highlight the following improvements on the original application for patent;

- ◆ *December 24, 1872* – 134.274 by William Harnett of Brooklyn, New York – Apparatus for mixing 6 drinks at once (six shakers on a turntable). This is the oldest existing documentation about a proper registration at the American patent for a license for the production of tools for the preparation of mixed drinks.
- ◆ *October 30, 1877* – 196.605 - by W.H Trepus a Chicago man – introduced a three-piece shaker but contained a complicated air vented from the bottom and it didn’t catch on, in those early days simplicity in design and function was most desired in the bars. Unfortunately the parts were harder to keep track of in a busy bar, and ice tended to block up the strainer and low the straining process. However sales did emerge in Britain mainly.
- ◆ *February 1, 1881* – 237.150 by L.H Williams - mixer with leak proof edge fairing.

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- ◆ August 29, 1882 – 263.394 by A. Eggers – combination shaker which allowed the addition of a tumbler if desired.
- ◆ January 30, 1883 – 271.350 by W.H Murphy – mixed beverage shaker which included a spring loaded strainer.
- ◆ June 24, 1884 – 300.867 by Edward .J Hauck of Brooklyn, New York – the first 3 piece cocktail shaker with built in strainer, just as is used today. This design also included an air vent to allow for faster pouring

(Miller et al, 2010, p. 9)

Wondrich (2007) contends that as the Nineteenth Century waned, cocktails achieved respectability, glasses were now made especially for them and newly-invented "combination shakers" (p. 38) which would simplify mixing and, along with the hoard of new recipe books, bring cocktail mixing popularity into the home. Calabrese (1997) highlights the fact that in 1886 the Meridian Britannia Company (now the American International Silver Company) catalogue featured twelve pages of barware, including six sizes of the two piece cocktail shaker (p. 46). In 1887 he adds that the Meridian Britannia Company from Connecticut presented in its catalogue six different two piece shakers, but it was the three-piece iron shaker that most met the customer's favour (p. 46).

1.4 1900 – 2010 – Golden Times, Retirement and Renaissance Period

Haigh (2007) states that in this period martinis were served from sterling silver cocktail shakers by high society while the less affluent made do with glass or nickel-plated devices. Cocktail Shakers in England around 1908 were a symbol of elegance taking their inspiration from silver teapots, between the period of 1900 to 1920 the 5 o'clock Tea switched to the 5 o'clock Cocktail Hour (Grimes, 1993). Martini shakers in this period began resembling teapots. Calabrese (1997) states that Harrods the famous London department store actually featured two silver-plated cocktail shakers in their 1908 catalogue priced at four shillings and nine pence and five shillings and nine pence, these shakers were advertised as being 'for mixing American drinks' (p.46). During the period leading up to 1920s the Great War was finally over and the sacrifice was replaced by a euphoria marked by party-going and a frenzied quest for pleasure. Cocktails in the 1920s were 'fashionable' and were used to hide the flavour of 'bath-tub' spirits (Doxat, 1979, p. 26), cocktail shakers also epitomized the glamour of the 1920s and '30s, the elegance associated with drinking that was

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depicted on film screens of the era was found at home in these streamlined objects (Bergam, 1971).

The 1920s also brought about an unexpected stimulant for the popularity of the “mixed drink” with the introduction of *Prohibition* in America, which started on January 17th 1920 and lasted until 1933. Doxat (1979) argues that in the seventeen years from 1920 to 1937 cocktail recipes rose to a figure of 7,000, he contends that the great majority of these recipes were ridiculous and others mere adulterations of classic formulae (p. 26). During prohibition people who had never tasted a cocktail before were knocking on speakeasy doors, this outlaw culture had a powerful pull. Visakay (1997) contends that the cocktail shaker in this era was celebrating a golden age when designers from the famous luxury goods houses had a ball with novelty cocktail shakers. Patents lodged in this period highlighted the need to disguise the shakers true identity and contents;

- ◆ *September 30, 1924* – 1,509,981 – Louis W. Rice – 3 piece shaker which was fluted dome interior feature which could be used as a juicer called a ‘beverage shaker’ instead of ‘cocktail shaker, this name was used to deceive prohibitionist bans.
- ◆ *April 7, 1925* – 1,532, 681 - G.S Bryce – 3 piece glass shaker with cork, a metal stopper, strainer and metal pouring insert. This was the standard design for the 1920s.

(Miller et al, 2010, p. 9)

Visakay (1997) adds that in this period cocktail shakers were produced in all kinds of shapes, sizes, forms, and colours to disguise their true identity to appeal to the modern minded. Ingenious martini shaker designs were all the rage fashioned in the shapes that also signified speed, motion and new technology, Madden (1976) argues that cocktail shaker skills and drink rituals were as important in the Jazz Age lifestyle as the latest dance steps. Jackson (2002) agrees and adds that it was the ‘jazz age that passed the cocktail into folk history as a disguise for bootleg liquor’(p. 132). By the end of the 1930s decade, martini shakers had become standard household objects; affordable to all people resorted to drinking socially at home. Lifshay (1973) contends that every family had at least one cocktail shaker on the shelf, cocktail parties were influencing fashion and coffee tables were now cocktail tables

The golden era of the martini shaker finished in 1940 with America’s involvement in the Second World War the production of metal shakers stopped since all metal was required for the war effort (Calabrese, 1997, p. 46). Companies that

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once made cocktail shakers, now made artillery shells. After the war, we were in the atomic age, thinking of jet-propelled airplanes, and a thing called television, and new cars with lots of chrome shakers. Social patterns around the world changed after an austerity-ridden period of re-settlement (Haigh, 2009, p. 26). Doxat (1979) argued that the wealth was more evenly distributed and that habits of good living were not the pre-requisite of a few leaders of fashion and their followers, cocktails were no longer wildly enjoyed (p. 28)

In the early 1950s the cocktail shaker made a short brief comeback when new homes featuring finished basements, called ‘roc rooms’, were equipped with bars (Martini Social Club, 2012; Miller et al, 2010, p. 9). Brooks & Bosker (1998) suggest that ‘cocktails were the kind of magic elixir that took you to a better place, if only for an afternoon’ (p. 7). But this was an era of technology and electrical appliances could do the job faster and better, this was the push button era for drink dispensers, shakers came with battery powered stirring devices, and the electric blender took the place of the shaker Miller et al (2010, p. 9). Haigh (2009) states that in this period ‘distillers heavily marketed blended whiskey and neutral spirits to help the longevity of their aged whiskey stocks and to speed up the production of their product’ (p.27). He contends that the distillers then pitched an alternative drinking style: the highball, ‘distillery executives could make big savings, this is how vodka was reborn in America’ (p. 27). You could now take several cubes of ice, add alcohol, a package of ready mix, flick a switch and you have an instant drink, it was farewell to the ritual, showmanship, personality and elegance (Martini Social Club, 2012). Calabrese (1997) contends that the blender helped to change the taste of cocktails, it meant ‘pieces of fruit and thicker juices could be added to alcohol’, he adds that ‘drinks became longer, colourful and textural’ (pp. 48-49).

As the 1960s arrived Haigh (2007) contends that cocktails were considered ‘old-fashioned and establishmentarian’ (p. 28), he adds that this attitude carried into the 1970s up to the 1990s, cocktails were tall, bland, sweet drinks and because of global consolidation of the liquor industry some brands died. In the late 1990s something changed, nostalgia was in and the public starting looking back to a time when drinks were something a bit more special (Haigh, 2007, p. 32), liquor companies began producing greater varieties of premium spirits. Bartenders began mixing with purpose, researching and defining obscure and defunct ingredients (p. 33). In this period department stores report that sales of cocktail shakers and glasses

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are overtaking sales of tea sets – a traditional wedding list gift (Calabrese, 1997, p. 44). This revival in cocktails has again stimulated the interest of design houses and designers creating the following limited edition shakers;

- Arne Jacobsen – ‘Stelton Cylindrical’ (Stelton Lifestyle, 2012)
- Alessi Bauhaus (Anomino) made under license from original Sylvia Stave - Swedish designer (Alessi, 2012)
- Ron Arad – ‘The Alessi Chiringuito RA10’ (Alessi, 2012)
- Carl Merten’s – ‘The Hampton’ (All Modern, 2012)
- Corbell Company - ‘A270 Sterling Silver Shaker’ (Corbell Silver, 2012)
- Fred Bould - ‘Nambe Twist’ and Nambe’s ‘Cradle’ (Nambe, 2012)
- Michael Aram’s - ‘Jaipur’ and ‘Wood Grain’ shakers (Waterford Crystal, 2012)
- Paul Smith – ‘Statement Cylindrical’ - revamping Arne Jacobsen cylindrical design, with special titanium alloy surface, deep black colour and statement message written in steel (Stelton Lifestyle, 2012)
- Ralph Lauren – ‘Saver Auto’ (Ralph Lauren, 2012)
- Thomas O’Brien - ‘Darby’ crystal shaker (Reed and Barton, 2012)
- Waterford Crystal – ‘Marquis’ and ‘Marquis Verve’ (Waterford Crystal, 2012)
- The House of Bols in collaboration with it’s Amsterdam neighbour Coster Diamonds - Gold, silver and diamond Boston Shaker (Fraser Collection, 2012)

2. Industrial Designers influence on Cocktail Shakers - Art Deco

Wondrich (2007) argues that with the legalization of liquor in the USA, following the repeal of the Prohibition in 1933, the cocktail shaker became a symbol of the good life. In this period industrial design was at the height of popularity internationally and superstar designers such as Russel Wright, Kem Weber, Walter Dorwin Teague, Norman Bel Geddes and Lurelle Guild created streamlined modern masterpiece martini shakers, many in the shape of the new deity of architecture, the skyscraper (Linz, 2007, p. 76; Khachadourian, 2003, p. 52). Chuck Kaplan, president of the Chicago Art Deco Society cited in Mason (1993) suggests that the most highly prized cocktail shakers are those by the great American industrial designers of the 1930s sought by collectors of today as the perfect mix of form and function. Kaplan adds that German-made shakers (because of their workmanship) from this period are also of premium value, although the individual designers often are unknown. Four cocktail shakers from the Art Deco period are on permanent display in the Museum of Modern Art, New York (Calabrese, 1997, p. 44).

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The great design houses of Manning Bowman, Napier, Farber Brothers, Revere, Bernard Rice & Sons, Wallace Brother’s, Mappin & Webb, Barbours, International Silver Company of Meriden S. P. Company, Connecticut, Derby S.P. Co and Gorham of Providence, USA worked with these top designers in producing fantastic sterling, silver plate, and chrome vintage and antique cocktail shakers taking this aspect to an art form (Visakay, 1997). Calabrese (1997) adds that within the glorious Art deco design period the great companies such as Cambridge, Heisey, Imperial, Hazel Atlas, Duncan Miller, West Virginia Specialty and Owens-Illinois also leaped into action producing ‘stunning etched and silk screen designs were created and often in brilliant hues of ruby red, green and cobalt blue’ (p. 46).

3. Most Collectable Vintage Cocktail Shakers

Calabrese (1997) indicated that ‘a monogrammed silver cocktail shaker once owned by the late John F. Kennedy sold at auction for \$23,000’ (p. 44). Visakay (1997) suggests that cocktail shakers are collector’s items, the silver shaker which President Franklin D. Roosevelt (hereafter FDR) used to prepare the first Martini at the White House to celebrate the end of prohibition in 1934 is currently housed within the FDR Presidential Library and Museum (FDR Library, 2011). Visakay (1997) and Khachadourian (2003) add that because of their beauty and unique design vintage shakers are valued at thousands of pounds, they suggest that the following shakers are the most collectable.

- *Penguin Shaker*: designed in 1930 by the Napier Company of Meridian, Connecticut, USA offered in 16 and 28 ounce sizes originally for \$40 and \$60 respectively.
- *Golf Bag Shaker*: designed in 1925 by George H. Berry and manufactured by Derby Silver Plate Company a division of International Silver Company released in 1926 shaker had a short life. Very collectable it is 12 1/2" tall with a beautiful patina and the original cork lined top and spout cap.
- *Zeppelin Shaker*: designed by DRGM and made in Germany in 1928 after the Zeppelin, the first flying aircraft to serve in-flight cocktails, referred to as the travelling bar, four different variations when taken apart they contain 11-23 individual pieces (spoons, measures etc) ideally suited for making cocktails for 4 people – four little silver cups).
- *Wallace Brothers Rooster Cocktail Shaker*: Designed in the 1920's and made by Wallace Brothers, very rare stands at 14 1/4" tall with a very ornately curved tail that serves as the handle. The head comes off to put in the ingredients and the tongue unscrews to pour the drink. The bottom was stamped " W B 3880 Copyright USA ". It has a threaded screw cap and a rubber stopper.

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- *Lighthouse Shaker*: created in 1927, this crone plated shaker had a short life span, it’s life ended on black Thursday stock market crash of 1929 before prohibition started because nobody had \$75 for a cocktail shaker (cost too much). The most rare original huge 1927 International Silver-plate Lighthouse shaker was so big it actually had a handle on the bottom to hold on to while shaking. The even rarer model contains the factory installed music box on the bottom. It was 14" tall, The bottom is marked INTERNATIONAL SILVERPLATE PATENTED JAN. 11 1927
- *Ruby Lady’s Leg Cocktail Shaker set*: made in 1937 by the West Virginia Specialty Glass Company, USA, The Ruby Lady's Leg measures approximately 15 inches high from the base of its chrome cocktail slipper to its fancy top. The four matching glasses measure 3 1/4 inches high. There's a silver painted band at the top of the leg, and on the top and bottom of each glass. Fitted with a chrome high-heeled sandal. Made with an original Fleur-De-Lis patterns on the sides and front of the leg. One of the greatest shaker sets ever offered from the Jazz Age.
- *Manhattan Set Shaker*: designed in 1936 by Norman Bel Geddes includes the Revere Manhattan cocktail shaker, the matching Revere Manhattan tray and two of the very most rare matching cups! The cups are so hard to find because they were only made between 1936 and 1940. The Shaker measures a towering 13" high x 3 1/4" diameter, chrome plated over brass. The strainer is situated under the top cap. Marked on the bottom. And finally the elegant matching tray marked Revere Rome NY measures 14 1/2" x 11 1/2".
- *Skyscraper Shakers*: crone plated with crone plated glasses designed by Norman Bel Gettes in 1934-36 he was inspired by the 1930 New Chrysler, 1933 Empire State Buildings. Manhattan Skyscraper Service Set, Hawks Skyscraper, in 1940 the Hawks mixer was chosen by the Museum Of Modern Art, New York City, as representing the best in modern design in moderately priced commercial items.

Conclusion

The cocktail shaker has indeed come a long way from its simple beginnings as individual containers in South America to the innkeepers of the 1800s who discovered that these containers could be fitted together to create a seal to entertain their customers. This iconic piece of cocktail equipment and the many mixed drinks prepared within its chamber really developed with the availability of fresh ice in the 1800s. From the inventors of the late 19th century who delivered many functional developments to the superstar industrial designers of the 1930s who created the streamlined modern masterpiece shakers sought by collectors and museums as the perfect mix of form and function. The shaker over the last two centuries has symbolized the good life and the good times favoured especially in post World War periods it helped to replace sacrifice with party-going pleasures. The technology era of the 1950s and subsequent periodic global economic declines have challenged its

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sustainability. However the enduring interest in the cocktail shaker and the recent revival in cocktails have stimulated a renaissance period where modern designers are creating new functional and collectable cocktail shakers. Norman Bel Geddes stated in 1960 that ‘imagination creates the actual’, with these final words from this famous American industrial designer let’s hope that the shaker will continue to deliver memorable taste experiences and of course inspire our future designers.

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