

# **Introduction: The Art of the Well-Made Drink**

There is a moment, just before the first sip, when a cocktail exists in its most perfect state. The glass is cold in your hand. Light catches the liquid at just the right angle. Perhaps there's a wisp of citrus oil floating above the surface, or a perfect sphere of ice slowly surrendering to the spirit around it. In that moment, you're holding more than a drink — you're holding history, craft, chemistry, and culture, all balanced in a single vessel.

This book is about that moment. And the 150 drinks that can take you there.

## **Why Cocktails Matter**

We live in an age of unprecedented access to information. With a few taps on a screen, you can find thousands of cocktail recipes, watch bartenders demonstrate techniques, and order obscure ingredients from across the globe. And yet, paradoxically, the art of making drinks well has never been more valuable. Because knowing what to make is not the same as understanding why it works — or how to make it sing.

A cocktail, at its essence, is a conversation between ingredients. Spirit speaks to citrus. Sweet answers sour. Bitter provides counterpoint. Dilution and temperature conduct the entire orchestra. When these elements align, the result transcends its components. A Daiquiri isn't just rum, lime, and sugar—it's a perfect expression of balance that has delighted drinkers for over a century. A Negroni isn't merely equal parts gin, Campari, and vermouth — it's a meditation on bitter beauty that converts skeptics into devotees.

Understanding this alchemy is what separates someone who follows recipes from someone who truly makes drinks. This book aims to guide you across that threshold.

## **A Brief History of Getting Here**

The cocktail, as we know it, emerged in the early nineteenth century in America. The first published definition appeared in 1806: "a stimulating liquor, composed of spirits of any kind, sugar, water, and bitters." Simple enough. Yet from this humble formula sprang an entire art form.

The golden age came first—roughly 1860 to 1920—when bartenders like Jerry Thomas elevated mixing drinks to a theatrical profession. They invented classics that we still drink today: the Martinez, the precursor to the Martini; the Whiskey Sour, template for countless variations; the original cocktails that gave the category its name.

Then came Prohibition, and with it, a strange gift disguised as destruction. America's noble experiment drove drinking underground and talent overseas. The best bartenders fled to London, Paris, Havana, and beyond, spreading cocktail culture across the globe. In those foreign bars, they created new classics: the Sidecar in Paris, the Daiquiri refined in Cuba, the Singapore Sling at the Raffles Hotel. The scattered diaspora enriched the canon.

When Prohibition ended in 1933, something had been lost. The craft declined through mid-century, reaching its nadir in the 1970s and 1980s—the era of neon-colored shots, artificially flavored everything, and drinks designed more for speed than pleasure. Cocktails became afterthoughts, something to get through rather than savor.

The renaissance began quietly in the 1990s and exploded in the 2000s. Bartenders rediscovered forgotten recipes, revived extinct ingredients, and approached their work with the seriousness of chefs. They asked questions: Why do

we shake some drinks and stir others?

What does ice actually do? How can we make something old feel new? The answers transformed the industry.

Today, we stand at a remarkable moment. The knowledge accumulated over two centuries is available to anyone willing to learn. Classic techniques have been refined and documented.

Ingredients that were nearly extinct have been resurrected. And a new generation of drinks has joined the canon, proving that the cocktail is a living tradition, not a museum piece.

This book captures that moment — the best of what has come before, and the most exciting of what has emerged since.

## **The 150: How They Were Chosen**

Selecting 150 cocktails from the thousands that exist required difficult choices. Some drinks demanded inclusion through sheer historical weight — you cannot understand cocktails without the Martini, the Old Fashioned, the Margarita. Others earned their place through enduring popularity — the Espresso Martini, the Aperol Spritz, the Moscow Mule continue to dominate bar orders worldwide. Still others represent technical excellence, drinks that teach essential principles through their construction.

The selection follows several guiding principles:

**Historical significance matters.** Each drink in this book has a story worth knowing.

The French 75 was named for artillery in the First World War. The Sazerac traces New Orleans history through its glass.

The Last Word disappeared for decades before being

rediscovered in a dusty cocktail book. These stories aren't just entertaining — they connect you to the generations of drinkers and makers who came before.

**Popularity has earned respect.** Cocktail snobbery serves no one. If millions of people enjoy a drink, that drink has succeeded at its fundamental purpose: giving pleasure.

The Cosmopolitan may have been mocked by purists, but it introduced countless people to the idea that cocktails could be elegant.

The Long Island Iced Tea may be powerful to a fault, but it demonstrates how multiple spirits can harmonize. These drinks deserve understanding, not dismissal.

**Teaching value shapes inclusion.** Every cocktail in this book demonstrates something worth learning.

The Whiskey Sour teaches the sour formula that underlies dozens of other drinks.

The Negroni demonstrates equal-parts construction.

The Ramos Gin Fizz shows what's possible when you commit to technique.

Master these 150, and you'll have the vocabulary to create thousands more.

**Balance guides organization.** The chapters move through the major spirit categories—gin, vodka, rum, whiskey, tequila, brandy—before exploring sparkling wines, tiki and complex builds, low-ABV options, and coffee and dessert drinks. Within each chapter, drinks progress roughly from easier to more challenging. This isn't a rigid hierarchy — a simple drink made perfectly beats a complex drink made poorly — but it provides a pathway for building skills.

# How to Use This Book

You might read this book straight through, building knowledge chapter by chapter. You might flip to whatever spirit sits in your cabinet tonight. You might search for a specific drink you tasted somewhere and want to recreate. All approaches are valid.

Each recipe includes the essential information: ingredients, measurements, technique, and glassware. But beyond the formula, you'll find context — why the drink works, how it evolved, what variations exist. This context transforms recipe-following into actual understanding.

A few practical notes:

**Measurements use ounces.** This is standard in professional bartending and translates easily to metric (1 oz equals approximately 30 ml). Precision matters more than the unit —invest in a good jigger and use it consistently.

**Fresh juice is non-negotiable.** The difference between fresh lime juice and bottled is the difference between a vibrant cocktail and a dull one. If a recipe calls for citrus, squeeze it yourself, ideally within hours of use.

**Ice deserves attention.** Good ice is clear, dense, and appropriately sized for its purpose. Poor ice — cloudy, small, quick-melting — will undermine even perfect ingredients. Many drinks in this book specify ice type for good reason.

**Technique is teachable.** Shaking and stirring aren't mysterious arts. They're skills that improve with practice. The first time you shake a drink, it will feel awkward. The hundredth time, it will feel natural. Keep going.

# The Journey Ahead

Making cocktails well is a practice, not a destination. Even the most experienced bartenders continue learning — discovering new ingredients, refining techniques, finding inspiration in unexpected places. The 150 drinks in this book represent a foundation, not a ceiling.

Start with what interests you. If you love gin, begin with the first chapter and work through the botanical possibilities. If bourbon is your spirit, jump to whiskey and explore its range.

If you're hosting friends this weekend, find something in the party drinks section that will scale. There is no wrong entry point.

As you progress, pay attention to patterns. Notice how the sour formula — spirit, citrus, sweet — appears across categories. Observe how bitter ingredients like Campari and Aperol create complexity in otherwise simple builds. See how egg white transforms texture, how champagne adds effervescence and elegance, how coffee brings depth and energy.

These patterns are the grammar of cocktails; once you recognize them, you can speak the language fluently.

Most importantly, make drinks for people. A cocktail consumed alone is pleasant enough, but a cocktail shared becomes something more — a gesture of hospitality, a reason to gather, an excuse to linger in conversation. The best bartenders understand this. They know that the drink is ultimately a vehicle for human connection, a small luxury that makes an evening feel special.

You hold in your hands two centuries of accumulated wisdom, filtered through 150 carefully chosen drinks. Some are old friends you'll recognize. Others are strangers waiting to become favorites. All of them reward attention and care.

The glass is empty. The bottles are waiting. Let's begin.





# **THE BARKEEPERS HANDBOOK**

## **Jan Sauer**

### **150 Essential Drinks for the Home Bartender**

From the Daiquiri to the Zombie

A Complete Guide to Classic and Modern Cocktails

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The information in this book is intended for adults of legal drinking age. Please drink responsibly.

### **Dedication**

For everyone who has ever stood before a collection of bottles and wondered where to begin.

And for the bartenders—professional and amateur alike—who understand that a well-made drink is a small act of hospitality

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## **A Note to the Reader**

This handbook contains 150 cocktails organized by primary spirit across ten chapters. The progression within each chapter moves from simpler preparations to more complex ones—not because easy drinks are lesser, but because

foundations support advancement.

Every recipe has been tested. Measurements are precise. Techniques are explained. What remains is practice.

The best cocktail is the one you make for someone you care about, in the moment they need it.

Technical perfection matters less than generous intention. Make these drinks for yourself, for friends, for strangers who become friends. The recipes are merely starting points.

Welcome to the craft.



# Chapter 0: Foundations

Before we pour our first drink, we need to establish common ground. This chapter covers everything that comes before the recipe—the tools, techniques, ingredients, and principles that transform a collection of bottles into a functioning bar.

Consider it the grammar you'll need before writing sentences. Some readers will be tempted to skip ahead to the recipes. Resist that urge, at least initially.

The fifteen minutes spent understanding why we shake some drinks and stir others will pay dividends across every cocktail you make. The knowledge of how ice actually works will improve drinks you haven't yet imagined. Foundations matter.

## The Essential Tools

A professional bar contains dozens of specialized implements, many of which you'll never need.

A home bar requires far less. Here are the tools that actually matter, in rough order of importance.

### **Jigger.**

This small measuring device is the single most important tool you'll own. Cocktails are recipes, and recipes require precision.

The difference between a balanced drink and an unbalanced one often comes down to a quarter ounce. Free-pouring — estimating measurements by counting or feel — is a useful skill for busy bartenders but an unnecessary risk for everyone else.

Buy a jigger with clear markings (typically 1 oz and 2 oz, with fractional lines) and use it religiously. Japanese-style jiggers, with their tall, slim profile and internal measurement lines, offer the greatest precision.

## **Shaker.**

Two main styles dominate: the Boston shaker (a metal tin paired with either a mixing glass or a smaller metal tin) and the cobbler shaker (a three-piece set with built-in strainer).

Professionals overwhelmingly prefer the Boston style—it's faster, easier to clean, and more durable.

The two-tin variation seals more securely and chills more efficiently than tin-and-glass. If you buy one shaker, make it a Boston set with two metal tins.

## **Mixing glass.**

For stirred drinks, you'll need a vessel that allows gentle combination of ingredients. A pint glass works adequately. A proper mixing glass — heavier, with a pouring spout — works better. The weight matters: a heavier glass stays stable while you stir and retains cold longer.

## **Bar spoon.**

A long-handled spoon serves multiple purposes: stirring drinks, measuring small amounts (the bowl typically holds about a teaspoon), layering ingredients, and retrieving items from tall vessels. The twisted shaft isn't merely decorative—it facilitates the smooth rotation needed for proper stirring technique. Length matters more than style; ensure it can reach the bottom of your mixing glass comfortably.

## **Strainer.**

Two types serve different purposes. A Hawthorne strainer—the one with the spring coil around its edge—fits over shaker tins and holds back ice and large particles. A fine-mesh strainer (also called a tea strainer) catches smaller particles when double-straining. You'll use the Hawthorne constantly; the fine-mesh strainer becomes essential for straight drinks or drinks with muddled ingredients or egg white.

**Muddler.**

A blunt tool for crushing ingredients—typically citrus, herbs, or sugar—to release their flavors. Wood and plastic both work; avoid lacquered or varnished surfaces that might chip into drinks. The ideal muddler is long enough to reach the bottom of your shaker and comfortable to grip firmly.

**Citrus juicer.**

Fresh juice is non-negotiable for serious cocktails, which means you'll be squeezing citrus constantly. A handheld press (the kind that looks like a hinged cup) extracts juice efficiently from lemons and limes. For higher volume, a lever-style or electric juicer saves significant effort. Whatever you choose, ensure it handles the citrus sizes you'll use most.

**Peeler and channel knife.**

Citrus peel garnishes require clean cuts. A Y-shaped vegetable peeler produces wide swaths suitable for expressing oils and garnishing. A channel knife creates thin spirals for more delicate presentations. Both are inexpensive; both will see regular use.

**Cutting board and sharp knife.**

You'll cut fruit constantly—wheels, wedges, peels, and more. Dedicate a small cutting board to bar use and keep your knife sharp. Dull knives slip; sharp knives cut cleanly. These tools represent the essential kit. With them, you can make any drink in this book.

Additional items—Lewis bags for crushing ice, atomizers for absinthe rinses, specialized spoons and picks—are refinements rather than necessities. Start with the essentials and expand as your practice develops.

# Glassware

The glass shapes how you experience a drink. It affects temperature retention, aroma concentration, visual presentation, and the simple pleasure of holding something well-designed.

While you can technically serve any drink in any vessel, appropriate glassware genuinely improves the experience.

## **Coupe.**

The elegant, shallow bowl on a stem has become the default for most shaken cocktails.

Its wide opening allows aromas to reach your nose while the stem keeps your hand from warming the drink. Historically associated with Champagne (though poorly suited to it), the coupe has found its true calling in cocktails. Capacity should be 5-6 ounces for standard drinks.

## **Rocks glass (Old Fashioned glass).**

A short, sturdy tumbler designed for spirit-forward drinks served over ice. The wide opening accommodates large ice cubes and allows easy access for muddling. Standard capacity runs 8-10 ounces, though double rocks glasses (12-14 ounces) work better for drinks with substantial ice.

## **Highball and Collins glasses.**

Tall, narrow vessels for long drinks—those with significant mixer components. The shape maintains carbonation better than wider glasses and provides an attractive presentation for layered or effervescent drinks. Highballs typically hold 8-10 ounces; Collins glasses stretch to 12-14 ounces.

## **Martini glass (cocktail glass).**

The iconic V-shaped glass has fallen somewhat from fashion — its wide rim spills easily, and its shape makes

temperature maintenance difficult. Many bartenders now prefer coupes. Still, certain drinks look right in nothing else, and the glass remains a symbol of cocktail culture. If you acquire one, use it for genuine Martinis and their direct variations.

### **Nick and Nora.**

A smaller, rounder alternative to the coupe, named after the sophisticated couple from *The Thin Man* films. The slightly closed rim concentrates aromas and reduces spilling. Ideal for smaller, more potent cocktails. Capacity typically runs 5-6 ounces.

### **Flute.**

The tall, narrow glass designed for Champagne and sparkling wines. The shape preserves bubbles and directs effervescence upward. Essential for Champagne cocktails and drinks with sparkling wine components.

### **Tiki mugs.**

The playful, often sculptural vessels associated with tropical drinks serve both practical and psychological purposes. Their substantial walls provide insulation for ice-heavy drinks, while their appearance signals fun and escapism. Serious tiki requires appropriate vessels.

Start with coupes, rocks glasses, and highballs—these three cover most situations. Add specialized glassware as your interests develop. And remember: a drink served in the "wrong" glass still tastes the same. Glassware enhances experience; it doesn't create it.

# Ice

Ice is an ingredient, not merely a cooling mechanism. It dilutes, it chills, and it affects texture. Understanding ice transforms your drinks.

## **The physics.**

When ice meets liquid, heat transfers from the warmer substance (your cocktail ingredients) to the colder one (the ice). This transfer melts some ice, adding water to your drink.

The amount of dilution depends on several factors: the temperature difference, the surface area of ice exposed, and the duration of contact.

Shaking maximizes surface area contact and agitation, producing rapid chilling and significant dilution—typically adding 25-30% water by volume. Stirring minimizes agitation while still allowing heat transfer, producing gentler dilution—typically 15-20%.

These aren't flaws to avoid; they're tools to employ. Proper dilution integrates flavors, softens harsh edges, and brings drinks into balance.

## **Types of ice.**

Different applications call for different ice:

- Large cubes (2-inch squares or spheres) melt slowly due to their low surface-area-to-volume ratio. Use them for spirit-forward drinks served on the rocks—Old Fashioneds, Negronis, whiskey neat. The slow melt maintains strength while gradually opening the drink.
- Standard cubes (roughly 1-inch) work for shaking and general stirring. They provide sufficient surface area for efficient chilling without melting too rapidly. Most home freezer ice falls into this category.
- Cracked or pebble ice melts quickly due to high surface area. This rapid dilution suits drinks designed for it —

Juleps, Swizzles, certain tiki drinks. The fast melt also makes drinks more immediately approachable.

- Crushed ice melts fastest of all, creating slushy textures and quick dilution. Essential for specific preparations but inappropriate for most cocktails.

### **Quality matters.**

Ice absorbs odors from your freezer, so store it in sealed containers. Cloudy ice (caused by trapped air and impurities) melts faster than clear ice and looks less attractive. If presentation matters, consider directional freezing methods or purchasing bagged ice made from purified water.

### **Practical application.**

Always chill your glassware before use—either by filling it with ice water while you prepare the drink or by storing glasses in the freezer. Never shake or stir with too little ice; insufficient ice actually causes more dilution because the ice melts faster trying to chill the liquid. Fill your shaker or mixing glass generously.

## **Techniques**

Four fundamental techniques cover nearly every cocktail in this book. Master these, and execution becomes second nature.

### **Shaking.**

Shaking serves three purposes: it chills the drink rapidly, it dilutes the drink significantly, and it aerates the drink slightly. Use shaking for cocktails containing citrus juice, dairy, eggs, or other ingredients that benefit from vigorous integration.

To shake properly: Add all ingredients to one tin of your Boston shaker. Fill with ice until the tin is roughly three-quarters full. Seal tightly with the second tin (a firm tap

creates a vacuum seal). Hold the shaker with both hands—one on each tin—with the sealed connection between them (never trust the seal completely). Shake vigorously for 10-15 seconds; you should feel the tins become frost-cold in your hands. To open, hold the larger tin with one hand and strike it firmly roughly 90 degrees from the point where they meet. Strain immediately into your prepared glass.

Common errors: shaking too briefly (underdiluted, harsh drinks), shaking too long (overdiluted, watery drinks), using too little ice (surprisingly, this causes faster melting and more dilution), and inadequate sealing (a mess).

Some recipes may call for a whip shake. Add one or two small ice cubes and shake until fully dissolved. This limits the dilution to a specific amount and starts the cooling. Drinks are then usually served over crushed or pebble ice. The technique is a substitute for using a Hamilton Beach blender as it tries to add as much aeration as possible.

### **Stirring.**

Stirring chills and dilutes more gently than shaking, preserving clarity and silky texture.

Use stirring for spirit-forward drinks without citrus or other opaque ingredients—Martinis, Manhattans, Negronis, and their variations.

To stir properly: Add all ingredients to your mixing glass. Fill with ice until it reaches just above the liquid level. Insert your bar spoon and move it in a smooth circular motion, keeping the back of the spoon against the glass interior. The motion comes from your wrist and fingers, not your arm. Stir for 20-30 seconds; the glass should become cold and frosty. Strain into your prepared glass using a julep strainer or the strainer portion of your bar spoon.

Common errors: stirring too aggressively (this chips ice and introduces unwanted shards), stirring too briefly (underdiluted, room-temperature drinks), and allowing ice to overflow the glass (makes a mess and indicates impatience).

## **Building.**

Some drinks require no separate mixing—you build them directly in the serving glass.

This technique suits highballs and other simple preparations where carbonation must be preserved. Add ingredients to the glass, add ice, add carbonated mixer, and stir gently just once or twice to integrate. Excessive stirring dissipates bubbles.

## **Muddling.**

Muddling extracts flavor from solid ingredients—crushing citrus to release juice and oils, pressing herbs to liberate essential oils, dissolving sugar with liquid. The technique varies by ingredient:

- For citrus (as in a Caipirinha): press firmly and twist to extract juice while leaving oils in the peel.
- For herbs (as in a Mojito): press gently to express oils without pulverizing the leaves – aggressive muddling releases bitter chlorophyll.
- For sugar: press and twist to dissolve crystals into liquid.

Muddle in your shaker tin or directly in the serving glass, depending on the recipe. When muddling herbs with citrus, the citrus acids help extract herb flavors—add both to the muddling vessel together.

# **Understanding Balance**

Every cocktail exists on a spectrum of flavors: sweet, sour, bitter, strong, and dilute. Balance means finding the point where these elements support rather than overwhelm each other.

## **The sour formula.**

The most influential template in cocktails is the sour: spirit, citrus, and sweetener. The classic ratio—2 ounces spirit, 3/4 ounce citrus, 3/4 ounce sweetener—appears in

countless drinks. A Daiquiri is rum sour. A Margarita is tequila sour. A Whiskey Sour is, obviously, whiskey sour. Understanding this formula lets you improvise intelligently: swap the spirit, change the citrus, vary the sweetener, and you've invented a new drink.

The ratio isn't sacred. Lime juice is more acidic than lemon, so lime-based sours often use slightly more sweetener. Overproof spirits can handle more citrus and sugar. Personal preference matters—some people like their drinks more tart, others prefer sweetness. The formula provides a starting point for adjustment.

### **Bitter as balance.**

Bitter ingredients—Campari, Aperol, Angostura bitters, amari—provide complexity and counterweight. Bitterness cuts sweetness, lengthens finish, and adds layers of flavor that simple sweet-sour combinations cannot achieve. The Negroni demonstrates this principle: without Campari's bitterness, equal parts gin and sweet vermouth would taste cloying.

With it, the drink achieves sophisticated balance.

### **Dilution as ingredient.**

Water isn't neutral. Proper dilution opens flavors, integrates components, and softens harsh edges. An underdiluted drink tastes aggressive and disjointed.

An overdiluted drink tastes weak and watery. The right dilution—achieved through proper technique—reveals what the ingredients can become together.

## **Building Your Home Bar**

You don't need dozens of bottles to make excellent drinks. A thoughtful core collection enables hundreds of cocktails; expansion follows interest.

### **The essential spirits:**

- London Dry Gin. The backbone of countless classics. Look for a balance of juniper and citrus without excessive botanical complexity.
- Vodka. Clean and neutral, serving as a canvas for other flavors. Quality matters less than with characterful spirits.
- White Rum. Light and slightly sweet, essential for Daiquiris, Mojitos, and other Cuban-style drinks.
- Aged Rum. Deeper and more complex, suitable for spirit-forward preparations and tiki.
- Bourbon. Sweet corn notes and vanilla from American oak. The default whiskey for most cocktail applications.
- Rye Whiskey. Spicier and drier than bourbon, traditional in Manhattans and Sazeracs.
- Blanco Tequila. Clean agave flavor, essential for Margaritas and fresh tequila drinks.
- Cognac or Brandy. Grape-based richness for Sidecars, Champagne cocktails, and spirit-forward drinks.

### **Essential modifiers:**

- Sweet Vermouth. The red, sweetened fortified wine that defines Manhattans and Negronis.
- Dry Vermouth. The pale, dry style essential for Martinis.
- Campari. The bitter Italian aperitivo that anchors the Negroni family.
- Orange Liqueur. Cointreau or a quality triple sec for Margaritas, Sidecars, and countless others.
- Simple Syrup. Equal parts sugar and water, dissolved. Make it yourself; it takes five minutes and keeps for weeks refrigerated.

### **Essential fresh ingredients:**

- Lemons and limes. You'll use these constantly. Buy more than you think you need.
- Oranges. For juice and garnish.

- Eggs. Specifically the whites, for texture in sours and fizzes.

### **Essential bitters:**

- Angostura. The default aromatic bitters, used in Old Fashioneds, Manhattans, and dozens of other drinks.
- Orange bitters. Adds citrus complexity to stirred drinks.

This collection — eight spirits, five modifiers, fresh citrus, eggs, and two bitters—enables you to make perhaps seventy drinks in this book. From there, expansion follows curiosity. If you fall in love with tiki, you'll acquire falernum and orgeat. If Chartreuse captivates you, both colors will find shelf space. If mezcal becomes an obsession, multiple expressions will accumulate. Let your tastes guide your purchases.

## **A Note on Quality**

Better ingredients make better drinks. This is obvious but worth emphasizing. A Martini made with bottom-shelf gin and oxidized vermouth will never satisfy, regardless of technique. The same recipe with quality gin and fresh vermouth transforms into something worth savoring.

This doesn't mean you need the most expensive bottles. Mid-range spirits often outperform premium options in cocktails, where subtlety gets lost among other ingredients. What matters is appropriateness: fresh vermouth (stored refrigerated and used within a month of opening), quality citrus juice (squeezed the same day, ideally within hours), and spirits you'd happily sip straight.

The one area where economizing fails completely is citrus. Bottled lime juice, no matter how convenient, produces inferior drinks. The compounds that make citrus juice vibrant and alive begin degrading within hours of squeezing. No preservation method captures what fresh juice offers. Accept this, buy a juicer, and squeeze as needed.

## Before We Begin

You now have the vocabulary for what follows. You understand why tools matter and which ones you need. You grasp the principles behind techniques—why shaking serves different purposes than stirring, how ice functions as an ingredient. You've seen the framework of balance that underlies all cocktails and the core bottles that enable most recipes.

What remains is practice. The first drink you shake will feel awkward. The tenth will feel more natural. The hundredth will feel like an extension of your hands. This progression happens for everyone; the only variable is persistence. Start with drinks that appeal to you. Make them repeatedly until they feel effortless. Then push into unfamiliar territory—a technique you haven't tried, a flavor profile outside your comfort zone, a spirit you've never explored. Each new drink adds to your understanding of all drinks.

The 150 cocktails that follow represent two centuries of accumulated wisdom. Some are simple enough to make perfectly on your first attempt. Others will challenge you for years. All of them reward attention and care.

The foundations are laid. Let's build something on them.



# Chapter 1: Gin - The Botanical Spirit

No spirit has shaped cocktail culture more profoundly than gin. From the Martini to the Negroni, from Victorian London to modern Barcelona, gin has provided the backbone for drinks that define eras. Its botanical complexity makes it simultaneously distinctive and mixable—assertive enough to stand up to strong flavors, nuanced enough to reward attention. To understand cocktails, you must understand gin. And to understand gin, you must understand its remarkable journey from medicine to menace to masterpiece.

## A Spirit's Redemption

Gin's story begins not in England but in the Netherlands, where sixteenth-century physicians distilled juniper berries into jenever—a medicinal spirit believed to treat kidney ailments and gout. Dutch courage, the phrase goes, and the origin is literal: soldiers drank jenever before battle to steady their nerves. When English troops fighting in the Low Countries brought the taste home, they brought the habit with them.

What happened next was catastrophic. In 1689, William of Orange took the English throne and promptly encouraged domestic distilling while restricting French brandy imports. Grain was cheap, regulation was lax, and gin production exploded. By the 1720s, London had descended into what historians call the Gin Craze—a public health disaster of staggering proportions. At its peak, the average Londoner consumed over ten liters of gin annually. Workshops sold it alongside tools. Barbers offered it with haircuts. William Hogarth's famous engraving *Gin Lane* depicted the nightmare: mothers dropping infants, bodies in the streets, society dissolving into stupor.

The Gin Acts of mid-century gradually imposed order. Licensing requirements, quality standards, and taxation transformed gin from rotgut to respectability over the following hundred years.

By the Victorian era, gin palaces—ornate establishments with gas lighting and etched glass—had replaced the squalid dram shops. The spirit itself had evolved too. The invention of the column still in the 1830s enabled production of cleaner, purer base spirits. Distillers could now create gin of genuine refinement.

This refined gin became the foundation of the cocktail's golden age. When American bartenders of the late nineteenth century began mixing drinks with the precision of chemists, gin proved the ideal canvas. Its botanical complexity provided character; its clarity allowed other flavors to shine. The Martini emerged from this era, as did the Martinez, the Tom Collins, and dozens of other drinks that remain relevant today.

Prohibition scattered American bartending talent across the globe, and gin traveled with it.

Harry Craddock fled to London's Savoy Hotel, where he codified hundreds of gin drinks in *The Savoy Cocktail Book*. Other bartenders landed in Paris, Havana, and beyond, spreading cocktail culture wherever they went. Gin remained central to their repertoire.

The spirit's fortunes declined through mid-century. Vodka's rise, gin's association with older generations, and the general degradation of cocktail culture pushed it toward irrelevance. By the 1980s, gin had become your grandmother's drink—a spirit for people who remembered the Eisenhower administration.

The renaissance began quietly in the 1990s and accelerated through the 2000s. Craft distillers rediscovered gin's possibilities, creating expressions that ranged from aggressively traditional to wildly experimental. Bartenders, newly obsessed with pre-Prohibition recipes, found that those recipes demanded gin. The Negroni experienced a surge of popularity that shows no sign of abating. The gin and tonic, once a simple highball, became a canvas for elaborate garnishes and

premium tonics. Spain developed an entire gin tonic culture, serving the drink in balloon glasses with carefully matched botanicals.

Today, gin occupies a curious position: simultaneously classic and contemporary, traditional and innovative. The same spirit that anchored drinks in 1890 anchors drinks in 2025. The category has never been more diverse, more interesting, or more essential to understanding what cocktails can be.

## **How Gin Is Made**

Gin begins as neutral spirit, typically grain-based, then transforms through the addition of botanicals. Juniper berries are required by law and tradition; beyond that, distillers exercise enormous creativity. Coriander, angelica root, citrus peel, orris root, cardamom, cucumber, rose — the possibilities span the botanical kingdom. This flexibility explains gin's extraordinary range, from bone-dry London styles to aromatic contemporary expressions.

The most common production method involves steeping botanicals in neutral spirit, then redistilling the mixture. As alcohol vapor rises through the still, it carries botanical oils and flavors with it. Some distillers use vapor infusion instead, suspending botanicals in a basket above the liquid so that rising vapor passes through them. This produces lighter, more delicate flavors. A few producers employ vacuum distillation at lower temperatures, preserving volatile aromatics that traditional methods might destroy.

The number of botanicals varies wildly—some gins use fewer than ten, others exceed forty.

More isn't necessarily better. The art lies in balance, in creating a whole that exceeds the sum of its parts. A great gin presents juniper clearly while revealing supporting botanicals as you pay attention. The flavors should unfold, not compete.

# Understanding Gin Styles

Understanding gin's major styles helps in selecting bottles for specific drinks:

**London Dry** remains the benchmark. Despite the name, it needn't come from London—the term describes a method and flavor profile. London Dry gins emphasize juniper and citrus, with clean, dry finishes. They mix beautifully in nearly everything and should form the foundation of any gin collection. Beefeater, Tanqueray, and Sipsmith exemplify the style.

**Plymouth Gin** comes exclusively from Plymouth, England, and offers a slightly softer, earthier profile than London Dry. Only one distillery holds the geographical indication. The style works particularly well in drinks where you want gin character without aggressive juniper.

**Old Tom** represents a historical style, sweeter and rounder than London Dry. It predates modern dry gin and suits period recipes calling for a gentler touch. The Martinez demands it; other classics benefit from its softer edges.

**Contemporary/New Western** gins de-emphasize juniper in favor of other botanicals. Hendrick's cucumber-rose profile pioneered this approach; countless others have followed. These gins can be divisive—wonderful in drinks designed around their specific character, jarring in classics that expect traditional gin flavor.

**Navy Strength** simply means higher proof—typically 57% ABV or above. The name references the British Navy's practice of testing spirits by seeing if gunpowder soaked in them would still ignite. Navy strength gins deliver more intense flavor and cut through other ingredients more assertively.

For the drinks in this chapter, a quality London Dry handles nearly everything. Keep an Old Tom for the Martinez, and perhaps a Navy Strength for when you want extra punch. Beyond that, let taste guide your collection.

# Easy

## Gin & Tonic

The world's most popular gin drink requires no technique beyond assembly—yet rewards attention to detail more than almost any other.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz London Dry Gin
- 4-5 oz quality tonic water
- Lime wedge

Build over ice in a highball glass. Add gin, then tonic, pouring gently down the side of the glass to preserve carbonation. Stir once, briefly. Squeeze lime wedge over the surface and drop it in.

The Gin & Tonic emerged from British colonial India, where quinine-containing tonic water served as malaria prophylaxis. Officers discovered that gin made the bitter medicine palatable.

The drink traveled home with the empire and conquered the world. Quality tonic matters enormously. Mass-market tonics overwhelm gin with sweetness and artificial quinine flavor. Premium tonics—Fever-Tree, Q, East Imperial—use real quinine bark and restrained sweetness, allowing gin to shine. The difference justifies the cost.

Ice matters too. A G&T lives or dies by dilution and temperature. Use plenty of ice — a full glass — and fresh tonic. Flat tonic from a previously opened bottle produces sad drinks.

The garnish question sparks debate. Lime is traditional and correct. Lemon works. Cucumber suits some contemporary gins. Elaborate garnishes with herbs and citrus wheels have become fashionable; they can enhance or distract depending on execution.

## Tom Collins

The Collins template—spirit, citrus, sugar, soda—dates to the nineteenth century and remains endlessly useful. The Tom Collins, made with gin, stands as the archetype.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz London Dry Gin
- 1 oz fresh lemon juice
- 3/4 oz simple syrup
- Club soda to top
- Lemon wheel and cherry for garnish

Shake gin, lemon, and syrup with ice. Strain into an ice-filled Collins glass. Top with club soda and stir gently once. Garnish with lemon wheel and cherry.

The drink's name comes from an 1874 hoax. Pranksters would approach strangers claiming that a man named Tom Collins was nearby, saying terrible things about them. Victims would search fruitlessly for the nonexistent slanderer. Bartenders, seizing the moment, began serving a drink by that name — when you asked for Tom Collins, you actually got something.

The Collins works because it satisfies completely: tart, sweet, cold, refreshing, and long enough to last through conversation. It's the ideal warm-weather drink, substantial enough to hold interest but light enough to drink several.

## Gin Rickey

Strip the Collins to its essence—remove the sugar—and you have the Rickey. This bracingly dry drink has refreshed Washington D.C. summers since the 1880s.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz London Dry Gin
- 1/2 oz fresh lime juice
- Club soda to top
- Lime wheel for garnish

Build in a highball glass over ice. Add gin, lime juice, and soda. Stir briefly. Garnish with lime wheel.

Colonel Joe Rickey, a Democratic lobbyist, originally made his namesake drink with bourbon.

The gin version overtook it in popularity and became the definitive Rickey. The drink's austerity — no sweetener at all — makes it polarizing. Those who love it find sweetened drinks cloying by comparison.

The Rickey teaches an important lesson: sugar isn't mandatory. A well-made Rickey balances gin's botanicals against lime's acidity without sweetness mediating between them. It's a high-wire act that, when successful, produces profound refreshment.

# Gimlet

The Gimlet occupies peculiar territory—a drink defined by an ingredient that most modern bartenders refuse to use as originally intended.

## **Recipe (modern):**

- 2 oz London Dry Gin
- 3/4 oz fresh lime juice
- 3/4 oz simple syrup

Shake with ice. Strain into a chilled coupe.

## **Recipe (classic):**

- 2 oz London Dry Gin
- 1 oz Rose's Lime Cordial

Stir or shake with ice. Strain into a chilled coupe.

The classic Gimlet calls for Rose's Lime Cordial—a preserved, sweetened lime juice that British sailors used to prevent scurvy. Raymond Chandler immortalized this version: "A real Gimlet is half gin and half Rose's lime juice and nothing else." The problem is that modern Rose's tastes nothing like the original; it's become artificially flavored and excessively sweet.

Most contemporary bartenders make Gimlets with fresh lime and simple syrup, producing a superior drink by any objective measure. Purists object that this is simply a gin sour, not a Gimlet. Both camps have valid points. The recipes above give you both options.

# Intermediate

## Martini

No cocktail carries more cultural weight than the Martini. It has signified sophistication, urbanity, power, and vice. Presidents drink them. Spies order them. Writers romanticize them. The drink's simplicity — essentially gin and vermouth — belies its difficulty: there's nowhere to hide.

### Recipe:

- 2 1/2 oz London Dry Gin
- 1/2 oz dry vermouth
- Orange bitters (optional, 1 dash)
- Lemon twist or olive for garnish

Stir with ice for 30 seconds. Strain into a chilled cocktail glass or coupe. Express lemon twist over the surface and discard, or garnish with olive.

The ratio question has no single answer. Early Martinis used equal parts gin and vermouth — practically a different drink. By mid-century, the trend toward dryness had reached absurd extremes: Winston Churchill allegedly bowed in the direction of France; others merely looked at the vermouth bottle. Modern practice has restored balance, with ratios typically ranging from 4:1 to 6:1.

Vermouth quality matters critically. Dry vermouth oxidizes quickly once opened; refrigerate it and use within a month. Fresh vermouth transforms the Martini from cold gin into something harmonious and complex.

The olive-versus-twist debate is purely personal. Olives add savory, briny notes; twists add bright citrus oil. Neither is wrong. A Gibson substitutes a cocktail onion — lovely if you enjoy pickled onions, strange if you don't.

# Negroni

The Negroni is a perfect drink—and perfection requires no elaboration. Equal parts gin, Campari, and sweet vermouth. Stir. Serve. The recipe hasn't changed since Count Camillo Negroni requested a stronger Americano in Florence, around 1919.

## Recipe:

- 1 oz London Dry Gin
- 1 oz Campari
- 1 oz sweet vermouth
- Orange peel for garnish

Stir with ice for 30 seconds. Strain over a large ice cube in a rocks glass. Express orange peel over the surface and drop it in.

The drink's genius lies in its balance. Campari's bitterness checks the vermouth's sweetness.

Gin's botanicals bridge the two. The whole exceeds what the parts suggest. First-time drinkers often find the bitterness challenging; converts become evangelists.

The Negroni template invites variation. Swap gin for bourbon and you have a Boulevardier. Use Prosecco instead of gin and you've made a Sbagliato. Replace Campari with Aperol for a softer drink. The original remains the standard against which variants are measured.

## Aviation

The Aviation represents pre-Prohibition elegance—a drink that disappeared for decades when one of its ingredients became unavailable, then returned triumphantly when that ingredient was revived.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz London Dry Gin
- 1/2 oz maraschino liqueur
- 3/4 oz fresh lemon juice
- 1/4 oz crème de violette
- Brandied cherry for garnish

Shake with ice. Strain into a chilled coupe. Garnish with cherry.

Hugo Ensslin created the Aviation around 1916 at the Hotel Wallick in New York. The drink's pale purple color, imparted by crème de violette, suggests the sky at altitude—hence the name.

When Prohibition ended and bartenders reconstructed lost recipes, crème de violette had vanished from American shelves. The drink survived in diminished form until Rothman & Winter revived the violet liqueur in 2007.

The crème de violette requires restraint. Too much and the drink tastes like perfume; too little and it's merely a gin sour with maraschino. A quarter ounce achieves the delicate balance Ensslin intended.

## Bee's Knees

Prohibition produced many things, including creative ways to disguise inferior spirits. Honey and lemon did the job admirably—and, as it turned out, tasted wonderful even with quality gin.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz London Dry Gin
- 3/4 oz fresh lemon juice
- 3/4 oz honey syrup (1:1 honey to water)

Shake with ice. Strain into a chilled coupe. Optionally garnish with lemon twist.

The name comes from Prohibition-era slang meaning "the height of excellence." The drink lives up to it. Honey provides depth that simple syrup cannot match—floral notes that harmonize with gin's botanicals, a slight viscosity that improves mouthfeel.

Make honey syrup by combining two parts honey with one part warm water, stirring until dissolved. Pure honey is too viscous to mix properly in cocktails; diluting it ensures even distribution.

## French 75

Named for a fearsome piece of First World War artillery, the French 75 delivers a comparable kick. Gin, lemon, sugar, and Champagne — simple enough, but the combination exceeds expectations.

### Recipe:

- 1 oz London Dry Gin 1/2 oz fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 oz simple syrup
- 3 oz Champagne or dry sparkling wine
- Lemon twist for garnish

Shake gin, lemon, and syrup with ice. Strain into a chilled flute. Top with Champagne. Garnish with lemon twist.

The drink originated at Harry's New York Bar in Paris, either during or shortly after World War I.

The combination proved so popular that it spawned an entire category of Champagne cocktails.

Some versions use cognac instead of gin—also legitimate, if different.

Use actual Champagne or quality sparkling wine. Cheap prosecco lacks the acidity and effervescence the drink requires. The bubbles aren't merely festive; they lift and integrate the other ingredients.

## Clover Club

The Clover Club predates Prohibition, emerging from the Philadelphia men's club of the same name. The Bellevue-Stratford Hotel hosted this all-male salon of lawyers and writers—including William Butler Yeats—until World War I. The cocktail named for them combines raspberry, egg white, and gin into something simultaneously light and luxurious.

### **Recipe (modern):**

- 1 1/2 oz London Dry Gin
- 3/4 oz fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 oz raspberry syrup
- 1 egg white
- Fresh raspberries for garnish

### **Recipe (original, with vermouth):**

- 1 1/2 oz Plymouth Gin
- 1/2 oz dry vermouth
- 1/2 oz fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 oz raspberry syrup
- 1/4 oz egg white
- Fresh raspberry for garnish

Dry shake (without ice) all ingredients vigorously for 10-15 seconds to emulsify the egg white.

Add ice and shake again for another 10-15 seconds. Strain into a chilled coupe. Garnish with raspberries.

The drink's history reveals an ingredient often forgotten. The first published recipe appeared in the New York Press in 1901, calling for gin, lemon, sugar, raspberry syrup, and egg white. Dry vermouth was added to the recipe not long

after, appearing in early cocktail books. Over the decades, most bars dropped the vermouth — until Julie Reiner revived the original formula when she opened her Brooklyn bar, Clover Club, in 2008.

Reiner's insight was that the vermouth transforms the drink. Without it, the Clover Club is essentially a raspberry gin sour with foam — pleasant but unremarkable. With vermouth, the drink gains subtlety and depth, the wine's herbal notes bridging gin and fruit. Try both versions; you may find, as Reiner did, that the original surpasses its simplified descendant.

The dry shake — shaking without ice before adding ice — produces the drink's signature foam.

Egg white adds texture without flavor, creating a silky mouthfeel and beautiful pink cap. Those concerned about raw eggs can use pasteurized egg whites without significant loss.

## Southside

The Southside is essentially a Mojito made with gin—and the swap proves revelatory. Gin's complexity against mint's freshness, balanced by citrus and sugar.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz London Dry Gin
- 1 oz fresh lime juice
- 3/4 oz simple syrup
- 6-8 fresh mint leaves
- Mint sprig for garnish

Gently muddle mint in shaker. Add remaining ingredients and shake with ice. Fine-strain into a chilled coupe. Garnish with mint sprig.

The drink's name references Chicago's South Side during Prohibition, though the etymology remains disputed. Some claim Al Capone's speakeasies served it; others trace it to the Southside Sportsmen's Club on Long Island. Both stories may be true.

The fine-straining matters. Mint fragments floating in an otherwise elegant drink distract visually and texturally. Double-strain through a fine-mesh strainer to achieve clarity.

## Bramble

Dick Bradsell created the Bramble at Fred's Club in London in 1984—making it one of the few modern classics with undisputed authorship. Blackberry liqueur cascading through a gin sour produces something greater than either component.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz London Dry Gin
- 1 oz fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 oz simple syrup
- 1/2 oz crème de mûre (blackberry liqueur)
- Lemon slice and fresh blackberry for garnish

Shake gin, lemon, and syrup with ice. Strain into a rocks glass filled with crushed ice. Drizzle crème de mûre over the top, allowing it to bleed through the drink. Garnish with lemon slice and blackberry.

Bradsell designed the drink to evoke blackberry picking in the English countryside—the fruit's tartness, the scratches from bramble thorns, the particular pleasure of late summer. The visual presentation, with purple liqueur sinking through pale gold, reinforces the pastoral imagery.

## White Lady

The White Lady is a gin sour elevated by orange liqueur—the same combination that makes the Sidecar and Margarita successful. Harry MacElhone perfected it at Harry's New York Bar in Paris during the 1920s.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz London Dry Gin
- 3/4 oz Cointreau
- 3/4 oz fresh lemon juice
- 1 egg white (optional)

Shake all ingredients with ice (dry shake first if using egg white). Strain into a chilled coupe.

Some versions omit the egg white for a cleaner, more austere drink. Others include it for the silky texture it provides. Both approaches have merit; the egg white version more closely resembles other MacElhone creations.

## Singapore Sling

The Singapore Sling emerged from the Raffles Hotel around 1915, created by bartender Ngiam Tong Boon. What happened after that is confused—the original recipe was lost, and the drink served at Raffles today may or may not resemble what Ngiam made.

### **Recipe (modern reconstruction):**

- 1 1/2 oz London Dry Gin
- 1/4 oz Cherry Heering
- 1/2 oz Cointreau
- 1/4 oz Bénédictine
- 1 oz pineapple juice
- 1/2 oz fresh lime juice
- 1/4 oz grenadine
- 1 dash Angostura bitters
- 2 oz Club soda to top
- Cherry and pineapple for garnish

Shake all ingredients with ice. Strain into an ice-filled hurricane glass or highball. Top with Club Soda and garnish with cherry and pineapple.

The drink's complexity—seven ingredients before garnish—reflects tiki influence, though it predates the tiki movement. Some historians argue for simpler versions closer to gin slings with cherry liqueur. The elaborate recipe above represents the current Raffles standard.

## Corpse Reviver #2

The name suggests its purpose: resurrection after a rough night. Harry Craddock included this recipe in *The Savoy Cocktail Book* (1930), warning that "four of these taken in swift succession will unrevive the corpse again."

### Recipe:

- 3/4 oz London Dry Gin
- 3/4 oz Cointreau
- 3/4 oz Lillet Blanc
- 3/4 oz fresh lemon juice
- 1 dash absinthe
- Lemon twist for garnish

Rinse a chilled coupe with absinthe, discarding the excess. Shake remaining ingredients with ice. Strain into the prepared glass. Garnish with lemon twist.

The equal-parts construction makes this easy to remember and scale. Lillet Blanc has changed since 1930—it's less bitter than the original Kina Lillet—but the drink remains excellent. The absinthe rinse adds anise complexity without overwhelming.

# Advanced

## Last Word

Equal parts gin, green Chartreuse, maraschino liqueur, and lime juice—a formula that shouldn't work yet produces one of the greatest cocktails ever created.

### Recipe:

- 3/4 oz London Dry Gin
- 3/4 oz green Chartreuse
- 3/4 oz maraschino liqueur
- 3/4 oz fresh lime juice

Shake with ice. Strain into a chilled coupe.

The Last Word originated at the Detroit Athletic Club during Prohibition, disappeared entirely, and was rediscovered by Murray Stenson at Seattle's Zig Zag Cafe in 2004. Its resurrection sparked the equal-parts cocktail revival and inspired countless variations (the Paper Plane, the Final Ward, etc.).

Green Chartreuse is essential—yellow Chartreuse produces a different (though still good) drink.

The herbal complexity of the Chartreuse, the cherry-almond notes of maraschino, and the botanical character of gin somehow harmonize completely. The lime holds everything together.

## Ramos Gin Fizz

No drink demands more from the bartender than the Ramos Gin Fizz. Twelve minutes of shaking in the original specification; even with modern technique, you're looking at several minutes of effort. The result justifies every second.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz London Dry Gin
- 1/2 oz fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 oz fresh lime juice
- 1 oz simple syrup
- 1 oz heavy cream
- 1 egg white
- 3 drops orange flower water
- 1 oz club soda

Dry shake all ingredients except soda vigorously for at least 2 minutes. Add ice and shake for another minute. Strain into a chilled Collins glass without ice. Allow to rest for a moment, then pour soda slowly into the center of the drink, which will cause the foam to rise above the rim.

Henry C. Ramos created this drink in New Orleans in 1888. At his bar, teams of "shaker boys" would pass tins down a line, each shaking for a portion of the marathon mixing time. The result was legendary—a drink of cloud-like texture and ethereal flavor. Orange flower water is essential and potent. Three drops is correct; more overwhelms. The dry shake builds emulsion; the wet shake chills. The soda, added last, lifts the foam into its characteristic tower.

## Martinez

The Martinez may be the Martini's direct ancestor—or may simply be a related drink from the same era. Either way, it offers a fascinating glimpse at nineteenth-century tastes.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz Old Tom Gin
- 1 1/2 oz sweet vermouth
- 1 tsp maraschino liqueur
- 2 dashes Angostura bitters
- Maraschino Cherry for garnish

Stir with ice for 30 seconds. Strain into a chilled coupe. Garnish with maraschino cherry.

The Old Tom gin matters here. London Dry produces a harsher drink; Old Tom's sweetness integrates with the sweet vermouth and maraschino. If you've only ever known dry Martinis, the Martinez will surprise you—it's richer, sweeter, and more complex.

## Saturn

The Saturn won Popo Galsini the IBA World Championship in 1967, then vanished for decades until tiki historians revived it. Gin rarely appears in tiki drinks; here it anchors a tropical masterpiece.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/4 oz London Dry Gin
- 1/2 oz fresh lemon juice
- 1/4 oz passion fruit syrup
- 1/4 oz falernum
- 1/4 oz orgeat

Shake with ice. Strain into a chilled coupe. Optionally garnish with a lemon wheel or expressed lemon peel.

The drink demonstrates tiki's essential magic: combining unlikely ingredients into something greater than their parts. Passion fruit, almond (from the orgeat), spiced lime (from the falernum), and gin shouldn't cohere — yet they do, beautifully.

# The Gin Shelf

For the drinks in this chapter, you'll need at minimum a London Dry gin and an Old Tom. A bottle of green Chartreuse opens up the Last Word and several other classics. Maraschino liqueur appears repeatedly. Crème de violette enables the Aviation. Build outward from the essentials as your interest develops.

## Essential bottles:

- London Dry Gin (Beefeater, Tanqueray, or Sipsmith)
- Old Tom Gin (Hayman's or Ransom)
- Dry Vermouth (Dolin or Noilly Prat)
- Sweet Vermouth (Carpano Antica or Cocchi Vermouth di Torino)
- Campari
- Cointreau or quality triple sec
- Maraschino liqueur (Luxardo)
- Green Chartreuse

## Advanced additions:

- Crème de violette (for the Aviation)
- Plymouth Gin (for historical accuracy in certain recipes)
- Navy Strength Gin (for drinks that need extra punch)
- Crème de mûre (for the Bramble)
- Cherry Heering (for the Singapore Sling)

## Beyond These 19: Continuing Your Gin Journey

The drinks in this chapter represent gin's essential vocabulary—the cocktails that every serious drinker should know, the recipes that teach fundamental principles, the classics against which all variations are measured. But they barely scratch the surface of what gin can do. Once you've mastered these foundations, entire worlds await exploration.

### More Drinks to Discover

**The Bijou** combines gin, sweet vermouth, and green Chartreuse in equal parts—a drink that sounds overwhelming on paper but achieves remarkable harmony in the glass. The name means "jewel" in French, and each ingredient supposedly represents a gemstone: gin for diamond, vermouth for ruby, Chartreuse for emerald.

**The Casino** predates the Martini and offers a glimpse at how nineteenth-century drinkers took their gin: with maraschino liqueur, orange bitters, and lemon juice. It's slightly sweeter, slightly softer, and entirely charming.

**The 20th Century** appeared in the *Café Royal Cocktail Book* in 1937 and demonstrates how gin can anchor a complex combination. Lemon juice, Lillet Blanc, and white crème de cacao shouldn't work with gin, yet somehow they create something elegant and memorable.

**The Hanky Panky** comes from Ada Coleman, the legendary head bartender at London's Savoy Hotel in the early twentieth century. Her combination of gin, sweet vermouth, and Fernet-Branca has inspired generations of bartenders exploring the bitter spectrum.

**The Monkey Gland** pairs gin with orange juice, grenadine, and absinthe—a combination created by Harry MacElhone in Paris during the 1920s. The name references a dubious rejuvenation treatment popular at the time. The drink, unlike the treatment, actually delivers.

**The Pegu Club** emerged from the British officers' club of the same name in colonial Burma. Gin, curaçao, lime, and bitters create something citrusy and refreshing—a drink that traveled from Rangoon to inspire cocktail renaissance bars worldwide.

## Exploring Different Gins

Once you're comfortable with the drinks themselves, start exploring how different gins change them. Make a Negroni with your standard London Dry, then make it again with Plymouth, then with a Navy Strength gin, then with something contemporary like Monkey 47 or The Botanist.

The same recipe produces remarkably different results.

This exercise teaches something crucial: gin is not a monolith. The category contains multitudes. A juniper-forward London Dry and a cucumber-inflected contemporary gin are both legally gin, but they behave differently in cocktails. Learning which gins suit which drinks — and when to break those rules — represents an entire education in itself.

### Gins worth exploring:

- For traditional cocktails: Beefeater, Tanqueray, Plymouth, Sipsmith, Ford's
- For contemporary expressions: Hendrick's, The Botanist, Monkey 47, St. George Terroir, Roku
- For assertive juniper: Junípero, Perry's Tot Navy Strength, Tanqueray No. Ten
- For historical recipes: Hayman's Old Tom, Ransom Old Tom, Jensen's Bermondsey

- For tiki and tropical drinks: Aviation Gin, Citadelle, Bombay Sapphire

## **The Spanish Revolution**

No discussion of modern gin culture is complete without mentioning Spain. Sometime in the 2000s, Spanish bars transformed the simple gin and tonic into an elaborate ritual. They served it in balloon glasses (called copas) over abundant ice, garnished with botanicals specifically chosen to complement each gin's profile. A Hendrick's gin tonic might feature cucumber and rose petals; a Tanqueray version might include orange peel and juniper berries.

This approach — matching garnishes to gin botanicals — has since spread worldwide. It elevates a simple highball into something worth contemplating. If you enjoy gin and tonics, experiment with this philosophy. Taste your gin neat, identify its dominant botanical notes, and select garnishes that amplify or complement those flavors.

## **Developing Your Palate**

The path to gin expertise runs through deliberate tasting. Pour a small amount neat—no ice, no mixers—and pay attention. Note the aroma first: can you identify juniper, citrus, spice, floral notes? Then taste: how does the gin feel on your palate? Is it oily or light? Does it finish dry or sweet? Where do you taste the juniper — immediately, in the middle, or at the end? Repeat this exercise with different gins. Compare a London Dry to an Old Tom. Taste a traditional gin against a contemporary one. Notice how the same botanical — citrus peel, say — expresses differently in different contexts.

This foundation makes you a better cocktail maker. When you understand how a gin behaves neat, you can predict how it will behave in a drink. You'll know instinctively that a delicate floral gin will be overwhelmed by Campari in a Negroni, or that a juniper-heavy gin needs more sweetness

to balance in a Bee's Knees.

## **A Living Tradition**

The 19 drinks in this chapter span more than a century of cocktail history. The Martinez dates to the 1880s. The Ramos Gin Fizz emerged in 1888. The Corpse Reviver #2 appeared in 1930.

The Bramble was invented in 1984. The craft cocktail renaissance has added modern classics, and surely more will follow.

This is what living tradition looks like. The drinks evolve, the gins multiply, the techniques refine — but the fundamental relationship between juniper spirit and cocktail glass remains. Each generation inherits the work of previous generations and adds something new.

You're now part of that tradition. The drinks you've learned connect you to bartenders in Victorian London, Prohibition-era New York, mid-century Havana, and contemporary Brooklyn.

When you make a Martini, you join a conversation that has continued for over a hundred years.

Master these 19 drinks. Then push further. Explore the classics that didn't make this list.

Experiment with contemporary gins in traditional recipes. Invent your own variations. The foundation is solid; what you build on it is up to you.





# **Chapter 2: Vodka - The Versatile Canvas**

Vodka occupies a peculiar position in cocktail culture. Purists dismiss it as flavorless, a blank canvas that contributes nothing but alcohol. Enthusiasts counter that its neutrality is precisely the point—vodka supports other ingredients without competing with them. Both perspectives contain truth. Vodka will never provide the botanical complexity of gin or the barrel-aged depth of whiskey. But in the right context, its clean simplicity becomes a virtue.

To understand vodka's role in cocktails, you must first understand its remarkable conquest of American drinking culture—a conquest that transformed not just what people drank, but how they thought about spirits themselves.

## **The Colorless Revolution**

Vodka's rise in America reads like an unlikely success story. Before World War II, the spirit barely registered in the American consciousness. Whiskey dominated. Gin held the cocktail world. Vodka was something Russians drank — exotic, unfamiliar, vaguely suspicious.

The transformation began in 1934, when Rudolph Kunett purchased the rights to produce Smirnoff vodka in America. Sales were dismal. Americans didn't understand what vodka was for. The breakthrough came in the 1940s, when John G. Martin — who had acquired the struggling Smirnoff brand — partnered with a Los Angeles bar owner named Jack Morgan.

Morgan had surplus ginger beer; Martin had surplus vodka. Together, served in distinctive copper mugs, they created the Moscow Mule. The drink caught on, and vodka found its foothold.

What followed was one of the most successful marketing

campaigns in spirits history. Smirnoff positioned vodka not as a Russian tradition but as a modern, sophisticated choice for the upwardly mobile American. "It leaves you breathless," the advertisements promised — a not-so-subtle suggestion that vodka, unlike whiskey, wouldn't betray your lunchtime drinking. The messaging was brilliant: vodka was clean, smooth, undetectable. It was the spirit of discretion.

By the 1960s, vodka had overtaken gin in American sales. By the 1980s, it had passed whiskey.

The vodka Martini displaced its gin ancestor in public imagination—helped considerably by a certain fictional British spy who ordered his shaken, not stirred. Flavored vodkas proliferated.

Premium vodkas commanded ever-higher prices. The category that once struggled for relevance became the dominant spirit in America.

This dominance has provoked backlash from cocktail traditionalists, who argue that vodka's popularity came at the expense of more flavorful spirits. There's merit to this critique. The vodka boom coincided with—and arguably enabled—a general degradation of cocktail culture.

When your base spirit contributes nothing but alcohol, why bother with fresh juice or quality ingredients? The nadir arrived in the 1990s, when "-tini" became a suffix applied to any drink served in a V-shaped glass, regardless of whether it bore any relation to an actual Martini.

The craft cocktail renaissance initially marginalized vodka. Bartenders rediscovering pre-Prohibition recipes found those recipes called for gin, whiskey, and brandy—spirits with

character. Vodka seemed antithetical to the movement's emphasis on flavor and tradition.

Yet vodka persists, and for good reason. Some drinks work better with vodka's neutrality than with gin's botanicals. The Bloody Mary needs a clean backdrop for its savory complexity. The Cosmopolitan's cranberry-citrus balance would compete with juniper. The Espresso Martini relies on coffee and liqueur, not spirit character. In these contexts, vodka isn't a compromise — it's the right tool for the job.

# What Vodka Actually Is

Despite its reputation for flavorlessness, vodka is not simply neutral alcohol diluted with water.

The base ingredient matters. The distillation process matters. Even the water matters.

Traditional vodkas use grain—wheat, rye, or corn—as their base. Wheat vodkas tend toward clean, slightly sweet profiles. Rye vodkas offer subtle spice. Corn vodkas present a gentle

roundness. Potato vodkas, once common in Poland and Russia, deliver a creamier, slightly heavier body. More exotic bases include grapes (common in French vodka), sugar beets, and even milk whey.

Distillation strips away most of the base ingredient's character, but not all of it. Column distillation, used by most modern producers, can achieve extremely high purity — essentially extracting pure ethanol. But many premium vodkas deliberately retain trace congeners (flavor compounds) through lower-proof distillation or by blending highly rectified spirit with more characterful distillate.

Filtration further shapes the final product. Carbon filtration, the most common method, removes impurities and softens the spirit. Some producers filter through quartz, limestone, or even diamonds (more marketing than substance, that last one). Excessive filtration can strip vodka of what little character it possesses; minimal filtration can leave it harsh.

Water comprises roughly sixty percent of the finished product, and its mineral content affects mouthfeel and taste. Glacial water, spring water, water filtered through ancient limestone — these distinctions may seem like marketing, but they genuinely influence the drinking experience.

The practical implication: vodkas do differ, even if those differences are subtler than with other spirits. A wheat vodka from Sweden behaves differently than a potato vodka from Poland.

Tasting them side by side—neat, at room temperature—reveals variations in texture, sweetness, and finish that translate into the final cocktail. For most drinks in this chapter, a quality mid-range vodka works fine. For drinks where vodka plays a starring role, consider matching the vodka style to the cocktail's demands.

## Understanding Vodka Styles

**Western/Neutral Style:** Most American, Swedish, and French vodkas aim for maximum smoothness and minimal flavor. Absolut, Grey Goose, Belvedere, and Ketel One exemplify this approach. These vodkas work universally and offend no one.

**Eastern European Style:** Traditional Polish and Russian vodkas often retain more character — slight sweetness, subtle grain notes, hints of minerality. Żubrówka, Stolichnaya, and Russian Standard represent this tradition. They perform beautifully in simple preparations where the vodka's personality can register.

**Flavored Vodkas:** The category ranges from subtle (citrus-infused vodkas that enhance rather than dominate) to aggressive (birthday cake vodka, which you should avoid). Quality citrus vodkas like Absolut Citron or Ketel One Citroen serve legitimate cocktail purposes, adding brightness without additional sweetness. Most other flavored vodkas are solutions looking for problems.

**Craft and Small-Batch:** The American craft distilling movement has produced vodkas with genuine character—distinct base ingredients, minimal filtration, local water. These vodkas reward attention but may clash with recipes expecting neutral spirit.

For the drinks in this chapter, a quality neutral vodka handles everything. Keep a citrus vodka for the

Cosmopolitan and similar drinks. Beyond that, personal preference dictates.

# Easy

## Moscow Mule

The drink that launched vodka's American conquest remains one of the best arguments for the spirit's existence. Ginger beer's spice, lime's brightness, vodka's clean strength—the combination satisfies completely.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz Vodka
- 3/4 oz fresh lime juice
- 4-5 oz ginger beer
- Lime wheel for garnish

Build in a copper mug or highball glass filled with ice. Add vodka and lime juice. Top with ginger beer and stir briefly. Garnish with lime wheel.

The Moscow Mule's creation story involves three people with surplus products: John G. Martin with his unsold Smirnoff, Jack Morgan with his slow-moving ginger beer, and Sophie Berezinski with her inherited copper mugs. Marketing necessity became cocktail history. The distinctive copper mug, purely a promotional gimmick, has become inseparable from the drink's identity — and actually serves a purpose, conducting cold efficiently and keeping the drink frigid.

Ginger beer quality matters here. The spicier and less sweet the ginger beer, the better the Mule. Fever-Tree, Q, and Bundaberg produce versions worth seeking out. Standard ginger ale — Canada Dry, Schweppes — makes an inferior drink.

## Vodka Martini

James Bond's preferred drink has become shorthand for sophisticated drinking, despite—or perhaps because of—its simplicity. Vodka and vermouth, cold as possible, served straight up.

### Recipe:

- 2 1/2 oz Vodka
- 1/4 oz dry vermouth
- Orange bitters (optional, 2 dashes)
- Lemon twist for garnish

Stir with ice for 30 seconds. Strain into a chilled cocktail glass or coupe. Express lemon twist over the surface.

The gin Martini purists will object to this drink's inclusion—and to Bond's preference for shaking, which bruises the spirit and clouds the result. These objections have merit but miss the point.

The Vodka Martini exists as its own drink, not as a degraded gin Martini. It offers a cleaner, colder, more minimalist experience. Whether you prefer that experience to the botanical complexity of gin is purely personal.

Bond's famous order—"shaken, not stirred"—actually appears less frequently in Ian Fleming's novels than popular culture suggests. In *Casino Royale*, Bond orders the Vesper, not a standard Vodka Martini. But the association stuck, and countless vodka Martinis have been shaken as a result.

## Screwdriver

Sometimes the simplest drinks are the hardest to make well. Vodka and orange juice sounds like nothing—and yet the quality of each component matters enormously.

### **Recipe:**

- 2 oz Vodka
- 4-5 oz fresh orange juice
- Orange slice for garnish

Build in a highball glass filled with ice. Add vodka, top with orange juice, stir briefly. Garnish with orange slice.

Legend attributes the Screwdriver's name to American oil workers in the Persian Gulf who stirred the drink with their screwdrivers. The story may be apocryphal, but it captures something true about the drink's unpretentious character.

Fresh-squeezed orange juice transforms this from a forgettable highball into something genuinely delicious. The difference between fresh juice and carton juice is as significant here as with any citrus cocktail. If you're using bottled orange juice, you're not making a Screwdriver — you're making something worse.

## Cape Codder

Cranberry and vodka—another two-ingredient drink that lives or dies by ingredient quality. The Cape Codder bridges the gap between simple highball and more complex cocktails.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz Vodka
- 4 oz cranberry juice
- 1/2 oz fresh lime juice
- Lime wedge for garnish

Build in a highball glass filled with ice. Add vodka, cranberry juice, and lime. Stir briefly. Garnish with lime wedge.

The drink takes its name from Cape Cod, Massachusetts, heart of the American cranberry industry. Ocean Spray, the cranberry cooperative, aggressively promoted cranberry juice as a cocktail mixer beginning in the 1940s—first with gin, then with vodka. The Cape Codder represents their success. The lime juice addition, not present in all recipes, lifts the drink considerably. Cranberry juice's tartness benefits from fresh citrus's brightness. Without lime, the drink can taste flat; with it, the flavors snap into focus.

## Bloody Mary

The Bloody Mary stands alone—a savory cocktail in a world of sweet and sour, a brunch institution, a blank canvas for infinite customization. No two recipes agree, and that's precisely the point.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz Vodka
- 4 oz tomato juice
- 1/2 oz fresh lemon juice
- 1/4 oz Worcestershire sauce
- 3 dashes Tabasco (or to taste)
- Pinch of salt and black pepper
- Celery stalk and lemon wedge for garnish

Combine all ingredients in a mixing glass with ice. Roll (pour back and forth between two vessels) or stir gently to combine — never shake, which creates unpleasant foam. Strain into an ice-filled highball glass. Garnish with celery and lemon.

Fernand "Pete" Petiot likely created the Bloody Mary at Harry's New York Bar in Paris around 1921, combining newly available Russian vodka with American canned tomato juice. He refined the recipe after Prohibition at the St. Regis Hotel in Manhattan, adding the spices and seasonings that define the modern drink.

The recipe above provides a starting point, not a prescription. Some add horseradish for sinus-clearing heat. Others include celery salt, Old Bay seasoning, or pickle brine. Still others float a splash of beef broth for additional savory depth. Garnishes have evolved into entire meals — bacon strips, shrimp, cheese cubes, whole pickles, sliders. The Bloody Mary invites personalization like no other cocktail.

## Greyhound

The Greyhound offers grapefruit's bracing bitterness against vodka's neutral background. It's the Screwdriver's sophisticated cousin—tarter, less sweet, more grown-up

### Recipe:

- 2 oz Vodka
- 4-5 oz fresh grapefruit juice

Build in a Collins glass filled with ice. Add vodka, top with grapefruit juice, stir briefly.

The drink originated in the 1930s, initially made with gin, and earned its name from the Greyhound Bus Company—it was served at Post House restaurants in their terminals. Vodka replaced gin as the standard base in the 1950s, following vodka's general conquest of American drinking.

A salted rim transforms the Greyhound into a Salty Dog. The salt tempers grapefruit's bitterness and enhances its sweetness—a worthwhile variation.

## Chi Chi

The Chi Chi is a Piña Colada made with vodka—same tropical flavors, different base spirit. It emerged from Hawaiian hotel bars in the 1970s, catering to guests who preferred vodka's neutrality to rum's funk.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz Vodka
- 1 1/2 oz pineapple juice
- 3/4 oz cream of coconut
- 3/4 oz heavy cream
- Pineapple chunk and cherry for garnish

Shake all ingredients vigorously with ice. Strain into a highball glass filled with crushed ice. Garnish with pineapple and cherry.

The drink proves that vodka can anchor tropical cocktails—though rum traditionalists may disagree. The cream of coconut (Coco López is the standard) and heavy cream create the rich, velvety texture essential to the style. Don't substitute coconut milk; it lacks the sweetness and body the drink requires.

# Intermediate

## Cosmopolitan

The Cosmopolitan became a cultural phenomenon in the 1990s, associated permanently with Sex and the City and a certain vision of urban sophistication. The association obscured a genuinely good drink—balanced, bright, and infinitely more interesting than its imitators.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz citrus vodka (or plain vodka)
- 3/4 oz Cointreau
- 1/2 oz fresh lime juice
- 1 oz cranberry juice
- Lime twist for garnish

Shake with ice. Strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Garnish with lime twist (flamed, if you're feeling theatrical).

The drink's origins are disputed. Cheryl Cook claims creation in Miami around 1985; Toby Cecchini refined it at The Odeon in Manhattan in 1988. Cecchini's version—using fresh lime juice instead of Rose's lime—is the one that became famous. Dale DeGroff further popularized it through his influential work at Rainbow Room.

The Cosmo is essentially a Kamikaze with cranberry juice—vodka, orange liqueur, lime — dressed up for a cocktail glass. Its pink color initially made it a "women's drink" in the unfortunate gendering of mid-century cocktail culture. Its quality eventually transcended such limitations.

## French Martini

The French Martini demonstrates that vodka cocktails can achieve elegance without complexity.

Pineapple juice provides sweetness and body; Chambord adds berry depth and beautiful color.

The result is sophisticated without being fussy.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz Vodka
- 1/2 oz Chambord (black raspberry liqueur)
- 3/4 oz pineapple juice

Shake vigorously with ice. Strain into a chilled coupe.

The drink emerged in New York in the late 1980s, created either by Keith McNally or Dale DeGroff at McNally's establishments. The "French" refers to Chambord, produced in France's Loire Valley since 1685. The martini glass presentation earned it the second half of its name — though it bears no relation to an actual Martini.

Vigorous shaking matters here. The pineapple juice contains bromelain, an enzyme that creates foam when agitated. This foam gives the French Martini its characteristic frothy top.

## Lemon Drop

The Lemon Drop applies the sour template to vodka—spirit, citrus, orange liqueur, sweetness — with results that range from cloying to transcendent depending on execution. Done right, it tastes like an adult lemon drop candy.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz Vodka
- 3/4 oz Cointreau
- 3/4 oz fresh lemon juice
- 3/4 oz simple syrup
- Sugar rim (optional)
- Lemon twist for garnish

Shake with ice. Double strain into a chilled coupe rimmed with sugar, if using. Garnish with lemon twist.

Norman Jay Hobday created the Lemon Drop in the 1970s at his San Francisco bar, Henry Africa's—a pioneering "fern bar" known for its plant-filled decor and its deliberate aim to attract female clientele. Hobday developed the drink as a "dessert cocktail" during a period when single women were increasingly socializing in bars, and he wanted something approachable yet sophisticated.

The name derives from lemon drop candies, reflecting the drink's characteristic sweet-and-sour profile. The Cointreau provides orange depth that elevates the drink beyond a simple vodka sour. While sometimes described as a vodka Martini variant, it's more accurately understood as a cousin to the White Lady or the Daisy family—spirit, citrus, orange liqueur, with sweetener for balance.

The sugar rim is traditional and serves a purpose here, complementing the tartness of the lemon and echoing the candy inspiration. Run a lemon wedge around the rim, then dip in fine sugar—not too thick, evenly applied.

## Pornstar Martini

Douglas Ankrah created this drink at London's Lab Bar in 2002, and it has since become one of the UK's most-ordered cocktails. The provocative name raises eyebrows; the drink itself delivers legitimate pleasure.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz Vodka (vanilla vodka traditional)
- 1/2 oz passion fruit liqueur
- 1/2 oz vanilla syrup
- 1/2 oz fresh lime juice
- 1 1/2 oz passion fruit juice
- 1 egg white (optional)
- Passion fruit half and shot of Champagne for garnish

Dry shake all ingredients if using egg white. Add ice and shake again. Strain into a chilled coupe. Garnish with passion fruit half. Serve with a shot of Champagne on the side.

Ankrah named the drink to convey indulgence and confidence—the feeling of glamour rather than any literal reference. The Champagne shot is meant to be sipped alternately with the cocktail, the crisp wine cutting through the tropical richness.

The drink has inspired debate about renaming—some bars call it the Passion Star Martini or similar euphemisms. The drink itself remains unchanged, and its popularity continues regardless of nomenclature.

## Vesper

James Bond's original creation—not the Vodka Martini, but something more complex. Gin and vodka together, with Kina Lillet, shaken until ice-cold. The result is greater than either spirit alone.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz London Dry Gin
- 1/2 oz Vodka
- 1/4 oz Lillet Blanc
- Lemon twist for garnish

Shake with ice until very cold. Strain into a chilled coupe. Garnish with a large, thin lemon peel.

In *Casino Royale*, Bond specifies "three measures of Gordon's, one of vodka, half a measure of Kina Lillet." The original Kina Lillet, discontinued in 1986, was more bitter than modern Lillet Blanc—some bartenders add a dash of quinine tincture or substitute Cocchi Americano to approximate the original profile.

The Vesper belongs equally to gin and vodka; its inclusion here acknowledges vodka's presence in Bond's signature order. The combination works because the spirits complement rather than compete—gin provides botanical complexity, vodka provides clean strength.

## Harvey Wallbanger

The Harvey Wallbanger exemplifies 1970s cocktail culture—a decade of questionable fashion, dubious mixology, and relentless marketing. Yet beneath the cartoon mascot and corny backstory lies a drink worth rediscovering.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz Vodka
- 4 oz fresh orange juice
- 1/4 oz Galliano
- Orange slice for garnish

Build vodka and orange juice in a highball glass over ice. Float Galliano on top by pouring it over the back of a bar spoon. Garnish with orange slice.

The drink is essentially a Screwdriver elevated by Galliano—an Italian liqueur with vanilla, anise, and herbal notes. That float of yellow liqueur transforms a simple highball into something more interesting, adding complexity with each sip as the layers intermingle.

The story claims the drink was named after a surfer who, after losing a competition, drank so many that he banged his head against the wall. More credibly, Galliano's American importers created the drink and the cartoon character to boost sales. The marketing worked; by the mid-1970s, Harvey Wallbanger was everywhere. Its disappearance during the cocktail's dark ages was complete—and its revival may be overdue.

## Sea Breeze

The Sea Breeze represents the vodka-cranberry family at its most refined—grapefruit adding tartness and complexity to the Cape Codder formula.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz Vodka
- 3 oz cranberry juice
- 1 oz fresh grapefruit juice
- Lime wedge for garnish

Shake with ice. Strain into a highball glass filled with ice. Garnish with lime wedge.

The drink's history stretches back to Prohibition, when it contained gin and grenadine. The modern version emerged in the 1980s, propelled by Ocean Spray's continued cocktail promotions. It's recognized as an IBA Official Cocktail—legitimacy for a drink sometimes dismissed as too simple for serious consideration.

The Sea Breeze works because grapefruit and cranberry complement each other beautifully — both tart, both fruity, but with different bitter and sweet notes. The vodka provides structure without interference.

# Modern

## Kamikaze

The Kamikaze is equal parts simplicity—just vodka, orange liqueur, and lime—and the direct ancestor of the Cosmopolitan. Understanding this drink illuminates an entire family of vodka sours.

### Recipe:

- 1 oz Vodka
- 1 oz Cointreau
- 1 oz fresh lime juice

Shake with ice. Strain into a chilled coupe.

The drink's origins are murky—possibly created at an American naval base in post-WWII Japan, possibly invented during the disco era. The name, meaning "divine wind" in Japanese, originally described the typhoons that dispersed Mongol invasion fleets. Later, it referred to suicide pilots.

For cocktails, it simply suggests potency.

The Kamikaze initially circulated as a shot—an efficient delivery mechanism for alcohol. Its evolution into a cocktail proper allowed appreciation of its actual flavor: bright, balanced, refreshing. The Cosmopolitan is simply a Kamikaze plus cranberry juice; understanding this relationship helps decode the vodka cocktail canon.

## Electric Lemonade

Blue Curaçao provides the Electric Lemonade's signature color—the drink looks like something from a science fiction movie. Beneath the visual drama lies a refreshing, summery cocktail that delivers more than its appearance suggests.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz Vodka
- 1/2 oz Blue Curaçao
- 2 oz fresh lemon juice
- 1 oz simple syrup
- Lemon-lime soda to top
- Lemon wheel for garnish

Shake vodka, Blue Curaçao, lemon juice, and simple syrup with ice. Strain into an ice-filled highball glass. Top with lemon-lime soda. Garnish with lemon wheel.

The drink represents everything the craft cocktail movement reacted against—artificial coloring, questionable ingredients, style over substance. Yet made properly, with fresh lemon juice and restrained sweetness, it's genuinely pleasant. The Blue Curaçao, despite its alarming color, is simply orange liqueur with food dye. The flavor is legitimate even if the appearance is not.

# The Vodka Shelf

Vodka demands less variety than other spirit categories. One quality neutral vodka handles most situations. A citrus vodka serves specific purposes. Beyond that, experimentation follows interest.

## Essential bottles:

- Quality neutral vodka (Absolut, Ketel One, Stolichnaya, or similar)
- Citrus vodka (Absolut Citron or Ketel One Citroen) for Cosmopolitans and similar

## Supporting ingredients for this chapter:

- Dry vermouth (for Vodka Martinis) Cointreau or quality triple sec
- Chambord or black raspberry liqueur
- Galliano (for Harvey Wallbangers)
- Passion fruit liqueur (for Pornstar Martinis)
- Cream of coconut (for Chi Chis)
- Quality ginger beer
- Cranberry juice (100% juice, not cocktail)
- Fresh citrus: lemons, limes, oranges, grapefruit
- Tomato juice and Bloody Mary seasonings

## Beyond These 16: Continuing Your Vodka Journey

The drinks in this chapter establish vodka's legitimate place in cocktail culture—not as a flavorless shortcut, but as a deliberate choice for specific applications. They demonstrate when neutrality serves a drink and when it creates a canvas for other flavors to shine.

## More Drinks to Discover

**The Black Russian** combines vodka and coffee liqueur over ice—nothing else. It's the simplest coffee cocktail, the foundation from which the White Russian builds by adding cream.

**The White Russian** became a cultural phenomenon through *The Big Lebowski*, where "The Dude" drinks them obsessively. Vodka, Kahlúa, and cream create something between a cocktail and a dessert.

**The Espresso Martini** represents vodka's most successful modern application—a drink where neutrality allows coffee to dominate while alcohol provides structure. Created by Dick Bradsell in 1980s London, it has become one of the world's most-ordered cocktails.

**The Salty Dog** is simply a Greyhound with a salted rim—but that salt transforms the drinking experience, taming grapefruit's bitterness and enhancing its fruit character.

**The Woo Woo** combines vodka with peach schnapps and cranberry juice—sweeter than the drinks in this chapter, but emblematic of a certain 1990s aesthetic that continues to satisfy those who enjoy it.

**The Godmother** partners vodka with amaretto—a sweeter, easier cousin to the Godfather (which uses Scotch). It's a simple drink for those who prefer almond sweetness to grain complexity.

## The Vodka Martini Spectrum

The Vodka Martini invites endless variation within a narrow template. Adjust the ratio—more vermouth for a wetter drink, less for something closer to cold vodka. Add a

rinse of absinthe for complexity. Garnish with an olive (dirty it by adding olive brine for a Dirty Martini) or a twist (orange or lemon). Each variation produces a distinctly different drinking experience from the same basic formula.

## **Infusions and Flavors**

Vodka's neutrality makes it the ideal base for infusions. Steep it with citrus peels, fresh berries, chilies, or herbs for a week, strain, and you've created something unique. This approach gives you control over flavor intensity and quality that commercial flavored vodkas rarely match.

Classic infusions worth trying:

- Lemon or orange peel (bright, citrusy)
- Cucumber (cool, refreshing)
- Fresh horseradish (intense, for Bloody Marys)
- Jalapeño (spicy, for adventurous cocktails)
- Vanilla bean (rich, for dessert drinks)

## **The Quality Question**

Vodka marketing has convinced many drinkers that expensive vodka is necessarily better vodka. Blind tastings routinely challenge this assumption. In cocktails—where other ingredients dominate—the differences between mid-range and premium vodkas often disappear entirely.

This doesn't mean all vodkas are identical. For sipping neat or in Vodka Martinis, quality matters. But for a Bloody Mary or Moscow Mule, a \$20 bottle performs as well as a \$50 one.

Spend your money where it makes a difference: on fresh juice, quality mixers, and the ingredients that actually define each drink's character.

## **Vodka's Place in Your Repertoire**

Vodka serves specific purposes in a well-rounded cocktail

practice. It provides the base for brunch drinks and savory cocktails. It supports tropical preparations where rum's funk would be distracting. It anchors coffee cocktails and cream drinks. It enables simple highballs that refresh without demanding attention.

What vodka doesn't do is substitute for more characterful spirits in drinks designed around those spirits' flavors. A Negroni made with vodka isn't a Negroni—it's something lesser. An Old Fashioned with vodka misses the point entirely. Vodka works when its neutrality serves the drink; it fails when the drink needs something vodka cannot provide. The 16 drinks in this chapter represent vodka at its best—applications where the spirit's character (or lack thereof) genuinely improves the result. Master these, and you'll understand what vodka can do. Then you'll know when to reach for it—and when to reach for something else.



# **Chapter 3: Rum - The Caribbean Soul**

Rum carries the Caribbean in every sip—sugarcane fields under tropical sun, colonial histories both celebrated and troubled, island rhythms and seaside ease. No spirit category spans such diversity: from the crisp, light rums of Puerto Rico to the funky, ester-rich expressions of Jamaica; from the grassy agricole rhums of Martinique to the dark, molasses-heavy rums of Demerara. To learn rum is to learn an archipelago's worth of styles, traditions, and techniques.

This diversity makes rum simultaneously accessible and inexhaustible. A Mojito demands only basic white rum and fresh mint. A properly constructed Mai Tai requires understanding how different rum styles interact. The spectrum between these drinks represents a lifetime of exploration.

## **A Spirit Born of Empire**

Rum's history is inseparable from the history of sugar—and the brutal plantation system that produced it. When European colonizers established sugarcane cultivation in the Caribbean in the seventeenth century, they discovered that molasses, the dark syrup left after sugar crystallization, could be fermented and distilled into a potent spirit. The earliest rums were rough, harsh, and produced primarily for the enslaved workers who labored in the cane fields.

The British Royal Navy institutionalized rum consumption in 1655, when Admiral Penn's fleet captured Jamaica and began issuing rum rations to sailors. The daily "tot" continued until 1970 — over three centuries of naval tradition. Rum became currency in the triangular trade connecting Europe, Africa, and the Americas, its commerce

fueled by human bondage.

By the nineteenth century, rum production had refined considerably. Column stills enabled lighter, cleaner spirits. Spanish colonial islands—Cuba, Puerto Rico—developed elegant white rums suited for mixing. British colonial islands maintained traditions of heavier, more characterful expressions. French islands, working from fresh-pressed cane juice rather than molasses, created the distinctive agricole style.

The American cocktail revolution embraced rum enthusiastically. Pre-Prohibition bartenders featured it in classics from the Daiquiri to various punches. During Prohibition, Americans flooded into Havana, discovering Cuban bartending culture and bringing its drinks back when the law changed. The tiki movement of the 1930s and 1940s—pioneered by Donn Beach and Trader Vic — transformed rum into something exotic, complex, and theatrical.

Mid-century decline hit rum as it hit all cocktails. The spirit became associated with overly sweet, artificially flavored concoctions — the "boat drink" cliché. Serious rum, like serious cocktails generally, retreated to the margins. The craft cocktail revival has restored rum's reputation. Bartenders now approach rum with the same seriousness they apply to whiskey or gin. Agricole rhums command respect. Aged expressions receive attention previously reserved for cognac. The Daiquiri, properly made, is recognized as one of the world's perfect drinks. Rum has emerged from its boat-drink exile, and the category has never been more exciting.

## Understanding Rum Styles

Rum's diversity can overwhelm newcomers. Understanding the major styles helps navigate the category and select appropriate bottles for specific drinks.

**White/Light Rum** provides the foundation for most rum cocktails. These rums are either unaged or aged briefly and

filtered to remove color. Spanish-style white rums (Bacardi, Don Q, Havana Club) tend toward clean neutrality. Jamaican white rums retain more character despite their clarity. For Mojitos, Daiquiris, and most shaken rum drinks, a quality white rum from Puerto Rico or Cuba sets the standard.

**Gold/Aged Rum** spends time in barrels, gaining color and complexity. The aging period varies enormously—some gold rums see only months in wood, others rest for years. Spanish-style aged rums (añejo) emphasize smoothness and vanilla. British-style aged rums retain more of rum's natural funk. These rums work beautifully in spirit-forward preparations like the Old Fashioned or El Presidente.

**Dark Rum** is a broad category encompassing heavily aged rums, rums with added color, and particularly robust expressions. Gosling's Black Seal, essential for the Dark 'n' Stormy, exemplifies the style. Jamaican dark rums like Myers's or Appleton bring intensity to tiki drinks.

The darkness often comes from caramel coloring as much as barrel aging—read labels carefully.

**Jamaican Rum** deserves separate mention for its distinctive character. Jamaican distilleries traditionally use pot stills and long fermentations, producing rums rich in esters—chemical compounds that create the "funky," overripe-fruit notes prized by tiki enthusiasts. Smith & Cross, Appleton, and Hampden Estate exemplify the style. A little Jamaican rum transforms blended tiki drinks.

**Demerara Rum** comes from Guyana's Demerara region and offers deep, molasses-rich character with notes of burnt sugar and tropical fruit. El Dorado is the major producer.

Demerara rums anchor many classic tiki recipes and provide backbone in rum blends.

**Rhum Agricole** from the French Caribbean (Martinique, Guadeloupe) is distilled from fresh sugarcane juice rather than molasses. The result tastes distinctively grassy, vegetal, and bright — closer to tequila's relationship with agave than to molasses-based rum. Agricole is essential for the Ti' Punch and brings unique character to modern rum cocktails.

**Overproof Rum** exceeds the standard 40% ABV, sometimes dramatically — Wray & Nephew is 63%, and navy strength rums typically reach 57%. These rums provide intensity in tiki drinks without excessive dilution and add punch when floated atop other cocktails.

**Cachaça**, Brazil's national spirit, is technically distinct from rum under Brazilian law but shares rum's sugarcane origin. Made from fresh cane juice like agricole, cachaça has its own character — slightly funky, grassy, distinctively Brazilian. The Caipirinha demands it; nothing else will do.

# Easy

## Mojito

The Mojito may be the world's most popular rum cocktail—and one of the most frequently botched. Done right, it's a masterpiece of refreshment. Done wrong, it's a muddled, overly sweet mess.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz White Rum
- 3/4 oz fresh lime juice
- 1/2 oz simple syrup
- 8-10 fresh mint leaves
- Soda water to top
- Mint sprig and lime wheel for garnish

Gently muddle mint leaves with simple syrup and lime juice in a highball glass — press to release oils, don't pulverize. Add rum and stir. Fill with crushed ice. Top with soda water. Stir gently to integrate. Garnish with mint sprig and lime wheel.

The Mojito's origins trace to sixteenth-century Havana. The earliest form, called "El Draque," was named after Sir Francis Drake, the English privateer. In 1586, Drake's crew reportedly suffered from scurvy and dysentery; a concoction of aguardiente (crude rum), mint, lime, and sugar was thought to alleviate symptoms. As rum production developed, rum replaced aguardiente, and the drink evolved into the Mojito known today.

The name's etymology remains debated. It may derive from the African word "mojo," meaning "to place a spell," referencing the drink's perceived medicinal qualities. Others connect it to the Spanish "mojar" (to wet) or to mojo,

a traditional Cuban lime-based seasoning.

Ernest Hemingway famously enjoyed Mojitos at La Bodeguita del Medio in Havana. The drink's global popularity exploded in the early 2000s, making it ubiquitous — and often poorly executed. The key is restraint with muddling (gentle pressing, not destruction), quality rum, and fresh mint.

## Cuba Libre

"Free Cuba"—the toast that named a nation's cocktail. Rum, cola, lime: simple ingredients with significant history.

### **Recipe:**

- 1 1/2 oz White Rum
- 2 lime wedges
- Cola to fill

Muddle lime wedges in a highball glass. Add ice, then rum. Top with cola and stir briefly. Garnish with lime wheel.

The Cuba Libre originated in Havana around 1900, shortly after Cuba gained independence from Spain following the Spanish-American War. Coca-Cola had just begun importing to Cuba, making this combination possible for the first time. A widely accepted story credits a U.S. Army Signal Corps captain who, celebrating Cuba's victory, mixed Cuban rum with Coca-Cola and lime, then raised his glass with the revolutionary cry: "¡Por Cuba Libre!"

The lime distinguishes a Cuba Libre from a generic rum and Coke—it provides tartness that balances the cola's sweetness and connects the drink to its Cuban origins. Without lime, you're just drinking rum and Coke. With it, you're participating in history.

## Dark 'n' Stormy

A trademark dispute in a glass. The Dark 'n' Stormy isn't just a drink—it's Gosling Brothers' registered intellectual property, and legally, the name can only apply to drinks made with Gosling's Black Seal rum.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz Gosling's Black Seal Rum
- 1/2 oz fresh lime juice
- Ginger beer to top
- Lime wheel for garnish

Build lime juice and ginger beer in a highball glass over ice. Float dark rum on top by pouring over the back of a bar spoon. Garnish with lime wheel.

The story begins in Bermuda after World War I at the Royal Naval Officers Club. British sailors, who drank ginger beer to settle seasickness, began mixing it with Gosling's Black Seal rum. A sailor observing the drink's layered appearance—dark rum floating over pale ginger beer — reportedly remarked it looked like "a cloud only a fool or a dead man would sail under."

Gosling Brothers has actively protected their trademark, pursuing legal action against establishments using other rums under the Dark 'n' Stormy name. Call it a "Rum Buck" or a "Stormy Weather" if you're using different rum—but Gosling's Black Seal genuinely works best here, its molasses-heavy character complementing ginger's spice perfectly.

## Piña Colada

The Piña Colada divides opinion. Detractors dismiss it as a tourist trap in liquid form. Advocates recognize it as a genuinely delicious drink when made properly—and Puerto Rico's official national cocktail since 1978.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz Puerto Rican Rum
- 1 oz cream of coconut (Coco López)
- 1 oz heavy cream
- 6 oz pineapple juice
- Cherry and pineapple for garnish

Blend all ingredients with ice until smooth. Pour into a hurricane glass or tiki mug. Garnish with cherry and pineapple.

The name means "strained pineapple" in Spanish. The modern drink's creation is disputed among multiple claimants: Ramón "Monchito" Marrero allegedly created it in 1954 at the Caribe Hilton Hotel in San Juan, using the newly available Coco López cream of coconut. Ricardo Garcia, another Caribe Hilton bartender, claims 1953. Ramón Portas Mingot insists he invented it in 1963 at Barrachina Restaurant.

Whoever deserves credit, the Piña Colada became iconic—helped considerably by Rupert Holmes' 1979 hit song "Escape" (the "Piña Colada Song"). The drink works because coconut and pineapple together create something greater than either alone, while rum provides the alcoholic backbone that prevents excessive sweetness.

## Daiquiri

The Daiquiri is the most important rum cocktail—and among the most important cocktails, period. Three ingredients, perfect balance, infinite nuance. Every bartender should master it.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz White Rum
- 3/4 oz fresh lime juice
- 1/2 oz simple syrup

Shake with ice. Double strain into a chilled coupe. Garnish with lime wheel.

Jennings Cox, an American mining engineer working near Santiago de Cuba, likely created the Daiquiri around 1898. The drink takes its name from Daiquirí, a beach and iron mine in the region—itsself a Taíno word. Cox improvised the drink for guests using readily available rum, limes, and sugar, adding crushed ice for refreshment.

The Daiquiri's simplicity obscures its difficulty. The balance between rum, lime, and sugar must be precise — too sweet or too tart ruins the drink. Temperature matters: shake hard, strain immediately, serve cold. Rum selection matters: a flavorful white rum shows its character here.

Constantino Ribalaigua Vert at Havana's El Floridita refined the Daiquiri across decades, developing variations including the Frozen Daiquiri. Hemingway was a regular, as was President Kennedy. The Daiquiri's reputation suffered mid-century when frozen, artificially flavored versions proliferated. The craft cocktail renaissance restored the classic preparation to prominence.

# Intermediate

## Caipirinha

Brazil's national cocktail demands Brazil's national spirit. The Caipirinha is not a rum drink — cachaça is its own category — but its sugarcane origins and technique earn it a place in this chapter.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz Cachaça
- 1 lime, quartered
- 2 barspoon superfine sugar

Muddle lime quarters and sugar in a rocks glass. Add cachaça. Fill with crushed ice and stir to integrate.

The Caipirinha likely originated around 1918 as a medicinal remedy during the Spanish flu pandemic. The initial concoction included cachaça, lime, garlic, and honey to alleviate symptoms. Over time, garlic and honey gave way to sugar and ice, creating the classic cocktail.

The name derives from "caipira," Portuguese for someone from rural Brazil—roughly translatable as "little redneck" or "country bumpkin." The Brazilian government officially declared the Caipirinha the national cocktail in 2003.

Cachaça's grassy, slightly funky character makes it irreplaceable here. Don't substitute white rum—the drink will taste different and lesser. The muddling technique matters: press firmly to extract juice and oils, but don't shred the lime into pieces.

## Mai Tai

The Mai Tai stands as tiki's most famous creation—and its most debased. The tourist version, laden with pineapple juice and artificial flavors, bears no resemblance to the original. Made properly, the Mai Tai is complex, balanced, and genuinely great.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz aged Jamaican rum (or blend of dark and overproof)
- 3/4 oz fresh lime juice
- 1/2 oz dry curaçao
- 1/4 oz orgeat
- 1/4 oz simple syrup
- Lime shell and mint sprig for garnish

Shake with crushed ice. Pour unstrained into a rocks glass or tiki mug. Garnish with spent lime shell and mint sprig.

Victor Bergeron (Trader Vic) claims creation in 1944 at his Oakland, California restaurant.

According to his story, he made the drink for Tahitian friends, who tasted it and exclaimed "Mai Tai Roa Ae!"—Tahitian for "Out of this world—the best!" The original recipe used 17-year-old Jamaican rum, lime, orgeat, orange curaçao, and simple syrup.

Donn Beach contested Bergeron's claim, noting he'd created similar drinks years earlier. The legal and historical dispute continues, though Bergeron retained the rights to the name. The Mai Tai's genius lies in orgeat—almond syrup that provides body and nuttiness without overt sweetness. Quality orgeat transforms the drink; artificial versions diminish it.

The rum should have character: Jamaican funk, not neutral Spanish-style rum.

## El Presidente

The "aristocrat of cocktails"—Cuba's elegant answer to the Manhattan. El Presidente demonstrates rum's sophistication in spirit-forward preparations.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz aged Cuban-style rum
- 1 1/2 oz dry vermouth
- 1/4 oz dry curaçao
- 1 barspoon grenadine
- 1 dash Angostura bitters
- Orange peel for garnish

Stir with ice for 30 seconds. Strain into a chilled coupe. Express orange peel over the surface.

The cocktail honors a Cuban president—either Mario García Menocal (president 1913-1921) or Gerardo Machado (1920s). A 1919 article in the New York Evening Telegram first described it, suggesting the Menocal attribution. Bartender Eddie Woelke at the Jockey Club in Havana may have created it.

El Presidente gained popularity during Prohibition, when Americans visited Cuba for legal drinking. Society correspondent Basil Woon deemed it the "aristocrat of cocktails." After mid-century decline, the craft cocktail revival rediscovered and reinterpreted this elegant Cuban classic.

## Old Cuban

Audrey Saunders created the Old Cuban in 2001 at New York's Pegu Club, marrying the Mojito's Cuban flavors with Champagne's French elegance. It's a modern classic that has earned its place among the established greats.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz aged rum
- 1 oz fresh lime juice 3/4 oz simple syrup
- 2 dashes Angostura bitters
- 6-8 fresh mint leaves
- Champagne to top
- Mint leaf for garnish

Shake rum, lime juice, simple syrup, bitters, and mint with ice. Double strain into a chilled coupe. Top with Champagne. Garnish with mint leaf.

Saunders initially called it "El Cubano." The "Old" in the final name specifically references the aged rum—a crucial component that provides depth and character the drink requires. The combination pays homage to classic Cuban cocktails while the Champagne introduction echoes the French 75.

The Old Cuban demonstrates that new classics can emerge from thoughtful combination of proven elements. Mint, lime, and rum connect to Cuba's cocktail heritage; Champagne elevates the drink to celebration status; bitters add complexity absent from the simpler Mojito.

## Planter's Punch

The Planter's Punch follows a famous formula: "One of sour, two of sweet, three of strong, four of weak." This rhyme—lime juice, sugar, rum, water—has guided punch-making since the earliest published recipe appeared in London in 1878.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz dark Jamaican rum
- 3/4 oz fresh lemon juice
- 1/4 oz grenadine
- 2 3/4 oz orange juice
- Orange wedge, cherry, and nutmeg for garnish

Shake all ingredients with ice. Strain into a highball glass over fresh ice. Garnish with orange wedge and cherry. Grate nutmeg over top.

The Planter's Punch originated in Jamaica in the late 1800s. "Planter" referred to plantation owners who enjoyed rum punch on their verandas. The Myers's Rum Company championed the drink, and it gained international recognition after World War II through tiki culture.

No single definitive recipe exists—variations abound. Some add pineapple juice. Some float overproof rum. Some insist on lime rather than lemon. The formula remains the constant: balance sour, sweet, strong, and weak elements to create something refreshing and substantial.

## Rum Runner

The Rum Runner pays tribute to Prohibition-era smugglers who transported illegal alcohol through the Florida Keys. The drink itself emerged decades later, from the same tropical territory.

### Recipe:

- 1 oz white rum
- 1 oz dark rum
- 2 3/4 oz pineapple juice
- Juice of half a lime
- 1 barspoon simple syrup
- Dash Angostura bitters
- Nutmeg for garnish

Shake all ingredients with ice. Strain into a highball glass over crushed ice. Grate nutmeg over top.

John "Tiki John" Ebert created the Rum Runner in the early 1970s at the Holiday Isle Tiki Bar (now Postcard Inn) in Islamorada, Florida Keys. Ebert devised it to utilize excess rum and various liqueurs—the original included banana and blackberry liqueurs, which many modern recipes retain.

The drink became a Florida Keys staple, appearing on tiki bar menus throughout the region. Its name honors the rum runners of Prohibition—smugglers who transported illegal alcohol by water between Cuba and Florida, establishing routes that bootleggers would use for decades.

## Hemingway Special

Also called the Hemingway Daiquiri or Papa Doble, this variation accommodates Ernest Hemingway's famous preferences: less sugar, more rum, added grapefruit.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz white rum 3/4 oz maraschino liqueur
- 1 oz fresh grapefruit juice
- 1/2 oz fresh lime juice

Shake with ice. Strain into a chilled coupe. Garnish with lime wheel.

The drink originated at El Floridita in Havana, where Hemingway was a regular in the 1930s.

Hemingway, who disliked overly sweet drinks, initially requested the house Daiquiri modified: less sugar, double rum. This became the "Papa Doble."

The recipe evolved further with grapefruit juice and maraschino liqueur additions, creating the Hemingway Special. The grapefruit's bitterness and maraschino's cherry-almond notes replace simple syrup's sweetness, producing a tart, complex drink that reflected Hemingway's adventurous palate.

## Airmail

Rum, lime, honey, Champagne—the Airmail combines elements of the Daiquiri, the Bee's Knees, and the French 75 into something distinctly its own.

### Recipe:

- 1 oz aged rum
- 1/2 oz fresh lime juice
- 1/2 oz honey syrup (1:1)
- 1 1/2 oz Champagne

Shake rum, lime juice, and honey syrup with ice. Double strain into a Champagne flute. Top with Champagne.

The Airmail appeared in a 1930 Bacardí promotional pamphlet, coinciding with the establishment of regular airmail service in Cuba, including flights between Key West and Havana. The name references the then-revolutionary airmail postal service—before widespread telephone, airmail was the fastest international communication method.

W.C. Whitfield featured the drink in his 1941 book "Here's How," famously remarking it "ought to make you fly high." The cocktail sometimes featured a postal stamp as garnish, emphasizing its aviation theme. After mid-century obscurity, craft cocktail bars have revived this elegant, effervescent classic.

# Advanced

## Navy Grog

Donn Beach transformed the simple British naval rum ration into an elaborate tiki creation, blending three rum styles with citrus and honey for complexity that rewards attention.

### Recipe:

- 1 oz Demerara rum
- 1 oz white rum
- 1 oz dark Jamaican rum
- 3/4 oz fresh lime juice
- 3/4 oz fresh grapefruit juice
- 1 oz honey syrup (2:1)
- Soda water to top
- Lime and mint for garnish

Shake rums, juices, and honey syrup with ice. Strain into a tiki mug or rocks glass over ice. Top with soda. Garnish with lime and mint.

The original "grog" dates to 1740, when Vice Admiral Edward Vernon—nicknamed "Old Grog" for his grogram coat—ordered sailors' rum rations diluted with water to prevent overindulgence. Donn Beach elaborated this simple mixture into something exotic in the 1940s.

Beach dedicated his Navy Grog initially to "gallant men of the American navy," later broadening to all navies. The three-rum blend creates layers of flavor: Demerara's molasses depth, white rum's clean brightness, Jamaican rum's funky complexity. The honey and citrus integrate these elements while soda lightens the drink for extended enjoyment.

## Test Pilot

Donn Beach created the Test Pilot in the 1930s, naming it for the era's aviation heroes breaking altitude and speed records. The drink itself requires navigating considerable complexity.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz dark Jamaican rum
- 3/4 oz white rum
- 1/2 oz Cointreau
- 1/2 oz falernum 1/2 oz fresh lime juice
- 2 dashes Angostura bitters
- 6 drops Pernod (or absinthe)

Flash blend (brief blend with crushed ice) or shake vigorously. Pour into a tiki mug. Garnish elaborately.

Donn Beach frequently altered his recipes, creating multiple Test Pilot versions. Tiki historian Jeff "Beachbum" Berry documented a circa-1941 recipe calling for Jamaican dark rum, Puerto Rican light rum, Cointreau, Pernod, lime juice, falernum, and bitters. The Pernod-and-bitters combination was a Beach signature.

Trader Vic published his own adaptation in 1972. Competitors created versions called "Jet Pilot." The Test Pilot represents tiki at its most elaborate—multiple rums, multiple modifiers, precise technique—delivering complexity that rewards every sip.

## Beachcomber

The Beachcomber offers relative simplicity within the tiki canon—rum, citrus, orange liqueur, and maraschino create something elegant and refreshing.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz white rum
- 3/4 oz fresh lime juice
- 1/2 oz Cointreau
- 1/4 oz maraschino liqueur

Shake with ice. Strain into a chilled coupe. Garnish with lime wheel.

The Beachcomber emerged in the early 1930s, gaining popularity during Prohibition when rum flowed freely. Its creation is disputed between Donn Beach and Trader Vic—both claimed versions, and the exact originator remains unclear.

The drink demonstrates that tiki needn't mean complexity. Four ingredients, properly balanced, create something greater than elaboration could achieve. The maraschino provides depth without sweetness; the Cointreau bridges lime and rum; the white rum lets the modifiers shine.

It's a masterclass in restraint within a category known for excess.

# The Rum Shelf

Rum demands more variety than vodka but less than you might fear. Strategic selections cover enormous ground.

## Essential bottles:

- White rum (Plantation 3 Stars, Bacardí Superior, or Havana Club 3)
- Aged rum (Appleton Estate Signature, El Dorado 8, or Plantation 5 Year)
- Dark Jamaican rum (Appleton Estate, Myers's, or Smith & Cross)
- Cachaça (Leblon or Novo Fogo) for Caipirinhas
- Gosling's Black Seal for Dark 'n' Stormys

## For serious tiki exploration:

- Demerara rum (El Dorado 8 or Hamilton 86)
- Overproof rum (Wray & Nephew or Hamilton 151)
- Rhum agricole blanc (Rhum J.M or Clément)
- Falernum (John D. Taylor's Velvet Falernum)
- Orgeat (Small Hand Foods or homemade)

## Beyond These 16: Continuing Your Rum Journey

The drinks in this chapter establish rum's range—from simple refreshment to tiki complexity, from Cuban elegance to tropical excess. But rum's possibilities extend far beyond these foundations.

## More Drinks to Discover

**The Zombie** is Donn Beach's most famous creation—a potent blend of multiple rums, citrus, and secret ingredients that Beach allegedly limited to two per customer. Versions proliferate; the original recipe remained secret for decades.

**The Hurricane** became Pat O'Brien's New Orleans legend—passion fruit, citrus, and rum served in the distinctive hurricane lamp glass. It's transformed from serious cocktail to tourist trap and back again.

**The Jungle Bird** emerged from the Kuala Lumpur Hilton in 1978, combining rum with Campari — a bitter element unusual in tiki drinks. Its rediscovery sparked renewed interest in tiki's global variations.

**The Painkiller** comes from the Soggy Dollar Bar in the British Virgin Islands—rum, cream of coconut, pineapple, and orange juice served over ice. Pusser's Rum trademarked the name, creating another rum trademark dispute.

**The Ti' Punch** is Martinique's essential drink—rhum agricole, lime, and cane syrup in proportions the drinker adjusts personally. It's the simplest expression of agricole's distinctive character.

## Understanding Rum Blends

Tiki drinks often call for rum blends—combinations of different styles that create complexity no single rum achieves. Understanding how rums interact opens creative possibilities.

A typical tiki blend might combine:

- Light rum for clean sweetness

- Jamaican rum for funky complexity
- Demerara rum for molasses depth
- Overproof rum for intensity

The proportions vary by drink and preference.

Experiment with your favorites—substitute different rums, adjust ratios, notice how each element contributes to the whole.

## **The Agricole Difference**

If you've only experienced molasses-based rum, agricole will surprise you. The fresh cane juice base produces a spirit closer to tequila's relationship with agave—grassy, vegetal, bright. Try a Ti' Punch to experience agricole's essence, then experiment with agricole substitutions in familiar drinks.

## **A Living Tradition**

Rum connects us to Caribbean history—the beautiful and the brutal. Every Daiquiri echoes Havana's golden age. Every tiki drink channels mid-century American escapism. Every sip carries sugarcane's journey from field to glass.

The 16 drinks in this chapter span centuries and continents, from Drake's sixteenth-century sailors to Audrey Saunders' twenty-first-century Pegu Club. They demonstrate rum's extraordinary range and its essential place in cocktail culture. Master these, explore further, and discover why rum remains the Caribbean's greatest gift to drinking culture.





# **Chapter 4: Whiskey - The American Spirit**

Whiskey sits at the foundation of cocktail culture. The word "cocktail" itself—first defined in 1806 as "a stimulating liquor, composed of spirits of any kind, sugar, water, and bitters"—describes what we now call an Old Fashioned. This isn't coincidence. Whiskey and cocktails grew up together in America, intertwined from the beginning.

Where gin speaks of botanicals and rum of the tropics, whiskey speaks of time. Every bottle carries years of patience—aging in charred oak, absorbing vanilla and caramel, developing complexity that cannot be rushed. This depth makes whiskey particularly suited to spirit-forward cocktails where the base spirit leads rather than follows.

The nineteen drinks in this chapter span two centuries of American bartending. From the Old Fashioned—quite literally the original cocktail—to the Paper Plane, added to the IBA's official list in 2020, they trace an unbroken line of innovation built on whiskey's substantial shoulders.

## **A Spirit Forged in Oak: The History of Whiskey**

The word "whiskey" derives from the Gaelic *uisce beatha*, meaning "water of life"—the same term that gave us *aqua vitae* in Latin and *eau de vie* in French. The Irish and Scots were distilling grain spirits by at least the 15th century, though the practice likely began centuries earlier. When these immigrants brought their skills to America, they adapted to local conditions and created something entirely new.

## **The American Story**

Whiskey came to America with immigrants, but it transformed into something distinctly American through circumstance and geography. In the late 18th century, settlers in Kentucky and Pennsylvania discovered that local corn grew abundantly and made excellent spirit. The limestone-filtered water of Kentucky proved ideal for distillation—the limestone removes iron, which would otherwise create off-flavors, while adding calcium and magnesium that aid fermentation. And the plentiful oak forests provided barrels for storage.

A pivotal moment came with the Whiskey Rebellion of 1791-1794. When the new federal government imposed taxes on distilled spirits, farmers in western Pennsylvania—who converted their surplus grain to whiskey for easier transport — revolted. Though the rebellion was suppressed, many distillers moved south to Kentucky and Tennessee, where enforcement was lighter.

This migration concentrated American whiskey production in the regions that would define it. The 19th century brought industrialization and standardization. In 1789, Elijah Craig supposedly became the first to age whiskey in charred oak barrels — though historians debate this.

What's certain is that by the mid-1800s, aging in new charred oak had become standard practice for bourbon. This technique, now legally required, gives bourbon its distinctive vanilla, caramel, and spice characteristics. The charring caramelizes wood sugars and opens the wood's pores, allowing spirit to penetrate and extract flavor during aging.

## **The Golden Age of American Whiskey**

By the late 1800s, American whiskey had achieved sophistication. Distillers like Colonel E.H. Taylor Jr. pioneered quality standards and marketing innovations. The Bottled-in-Bond Act of 1897 established federal guarantees of whiskey authenticity—a response to widespread adulteration in the industry. Bonded whiskey had to be the product of one distillation season, from one

distillery, aged at least four years in a federally bonded warehouse, and bottled at 100 proof.

This era also saw the flourishing of cocktail culture. The Manhattan emerged from New York's bars. The Old Fashioned represented tradition against innovation. The Whiskey Sour became the template for an entire family of drinks. Rye whiskey dominated—it was the whiskey of choice for most bartenders, its spice and dryness providing backbone that corn-sweet bourbon couldn't match.

### **Prohibition and Its Aftermath**

Prohibition (1920-1933) devastated American whiskey. Most distilleries closed permanently. The few that survived did so by producing "medicinal whiskey"—bourbon was literally prescribed by doctors and dispensed at pharmacies. Six distilleries held permits to produce medicinal spirits, keeping the industry barely alive. When Prohibition ended, the industry had to rebuild from near-extinction.

The recovery was slow and complicated by World War II, when distilleries converted to producing industrial alcohol for the war effort. Whiskey production essentially stopped for four years. By the 1960s and 70s, American whiskey had lost cultural ground to vodka and imported Scotch. The image of bourbon in particular suffered—it became associated with an older generation, with the past rather than the future. Rye whiskey nearly vanished entirely; by the 1980s, only a handful of expressions remained on the market.

### **The Modern Renaissance**

The cocktail revival that began in the 1990s restored whiskey to prominence. Bartenders rediscovering pre-Prohibition recipes needed rye whiskey—a style that had nearly vanished.

When Dale DeGroff and others began recreating classic Manhattans and Sazeracs, they foundrye essential to authenticity. Demand sparked supply: small distilleries began producing craft whiskey, and major producers responded with premium expressions and heritage

releases.

The bourbon boom accelerated through the 2000s and 2010s. What had been an overlooked spirit became the center of a cultural phenomenon. Limited releases commanded hundreds of dollars. Distillery tourism flourished along Kentucky's Bourbon Trail. Japanese whisky – influenced by Scotch but developed with characteristic precision—joined the global conversation.

By the 2010s, bourbon and rye had become the spirits of choice for serious cocktail bars.

Today, American whiskey enjoys unprecedented prestige. Bourbon cannot legally be produced outside the United States, making it as distinctly American as Champagne is French. In 1964, Congress declared bourbon "America's Native Spirit"—a distinctive product that represents American craftsmanship and heritage. Meanwhile, Scotch, Irish, Japanese, and Canadian whiskeys each bring their own traditions to the cocktail glass.

## **Understanding Whiskey Styles**

The whiskeys in this chapter come from several distinct traditions. Understanding these differences helps you choose appropriate substitutes and make informed modifications.

### **Bourbon**

American bourbon must be produced in the United States, made from a mash bill containing at least 51% corn, distilled to no more than 160 proof, entered into new charred oak barrels at no more than 125 proof, and bottled at minimum 80 proof. It has no minimum aging requirement, though "straight bourbon" must age at least two years.

These rules create bourbon's character: the corn provides sweetness, the new charred oak contributes vanilla, caramel, and spice. The remaining mash bill—typically including rye, wheat, or malted barley—influences the final

flavor. High-rye bourbons offer more spice; wheated bourbons (like Maker's Mark or Pappy Van Winkle) tend softer and sweeter. Bourbon's approachability makes it excellent for both sipping and mixing.

While 95% of bourbon comes from Kentucky, it can legally be made anywhere in the United States. The Kentucky designation has become shorthand for quality, but excellent bourbons now emerge from Texas, New York, and elsewhere.

### **Rye Whiskey**

American rye follows similar rules to bourbon but requires at least 51% rye grain in the mash.

Rye brings spice and dryness where corn brings sweetness—think black pepper, baking spices, and an assertive edge. Pre-Prohibition cocktail recipes typically called for rye, which dominated American whiskey production until the mid-20th century. The Manhattan, Sazerac, and Old Fashioned were all originally rye drinks.

The distinction matters in cocktails. Bourbon's sweetness can make some classic recipes taste unbalanced; rye's spice provides the backbone these drinks were designed around. When a pre-Prohibition recipe calls for "whiskey" without specification, rye is almost always the correct choice.

### **Tennessee Whiskey**

Tennessee whiskey—most famously Jack Daniel's and George Dickel—follows bourbon's rules but adds the Lincoln County Process: filtering through maple charcoal before aging. This "charcoal mellowing" removes harsh congeners and creates a distinctively smooth character.

Tennessee distillers consider their product categorically different from bourbon; the federal government considers it a bourbon subset. In cocktails, Tennessee whiskey behaves similarly to a gentler bourbon.

### **Scotch Whisky**

Scottish whisky (spelled without the "e") encompasses several styles. Blended Scotch combines malt and grain

whiskies from multiple distilleries—this is what most people mean by "Scotch." These blends offer consistency and approachability, making them ideal for cocktails.

Johnnie Walker, Dewars, and Famous Grouse exemplify the category.

Single malt comes from one distillery using only malted barley. The regional variations are significant: Speyside malts tend toward fruit, honey, and elegance; Highland malts offer more body and complexity; Lowland malts are lighter and grassier; Islay malts are famous for intense peat smoke, medicinal notes, and maritime character. Campbeltown, once Scotland's whisky capital, produces a handful of distinctive drams.

For cocktails, blended Scotch generally works better than single malt—you want reliable character rather than distinctive quirks. Reserve the single malts for sipping, or for specific applications like the Penicillin's smoky float.

### **Irish Whiskey**

Irish whiskey is typically triple-distilled (versus double for most Scotch and American whiskey), creating a smoother, lighter character. It traditionally uses unpeated malt, though peated expressions exist. The style suits cocktails requiring gentle whiskey presence—Irish whiskey won't dominate other ingredients the way bourbon or rye might.

The category has experienced remarkable growth, expanding from a handful of brands to dozens. Pot still Irish whiskey —made from a mix of malted and unmalted barley — offers more complexity than the ubiquitous blends, with a distinctive creamy, spicy character.

### **Japanese Whisky**

Though not traditional in classic cocktails, Japanese whisky deserves mention. Japanese distillers studied Scotch techniques in the 1920s and developed their own tradition emphasizing precision, harmony, and refinement. The style ranges from light and delicate (Hibiki Harmony) to robust and smoky (Hakushu). Japanese bartenders' obsession with the whiskey highball helped establish it as a

global phenomenon.

## The Whiskey Shelf

Building a whiskey collection for cocktails requires less variety than you might expect. Four bottles cover most situations:

**Bourbon (Essential):** Choose a mid-range expression with clear caramel and vanilla notes. Buffalo Trace, Four Roses, or Evan Williams Single Barrel work well. Save premium bottles for sipping.

**Rye Whiskey (Essential):** Rittenhouse Bottled-in-Bond has been the bartender's choice for decades — 100 proof, affordable, and excellent in cocktails. Old Overholt offers a gentler option at lower proof.

**Blended Scotch (Recommended):** For cocktails, you want approachable rather than challenging. Famous Grouse, Dewar's, or Bank Note provide clean Scotch character without overwhelming smoke.

**Irish Whiskey (Optional):** Jameson remains the standard—smooth enough to showcase in simple drinks, affordable enough for mixing. Powers or Redbreast offer more complexity.

# Easy

## Whiskey Sour

The sour formula—spirit, citrus, sweetener—forms the backbone of cocktail construction. Master the Whiskey Sour and you understand dozens of other drinks.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz rye whiskey
- 3/4 oz lemon juice
- 1/2 oz simple syrup
- Angostura bitters for garnish

Shake with ice. Strain into rocks glass over fresh ice. Dash bitters on top.

Its origins trace to maritime practices of the 18th century. Sailors facing scurvy mixed citrus with spirits as preventative medicine. The first recorded Whiskey Sour recipe appeared in Jerry Thomas's 1862 *The Bartender's Guide*, though the combination surely predates any publication.

The addition of egg white to sours dates to at least 1922, creating silky texture and impressive foam. This version remains optional but transforms the drink.

**Variations:** Add egg white for Boston Sour; float red wine for New York Sour; substitute honey syrup for Gold Rush.

## Old Fashioned

This is the original cocktail. The 1806 definition of "cocktail"—spirit, sugar, water, bitters — describes exactly what sits in an Old Fashioned glass.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz bourbon
- 1 sugar cube
- 4 dashes Angostura bitters
- Orange peel

Place sugar cube in rocks glass. Saturate with bitters and a splash of water. Muddle to dissolve. Add bourbon and a large ice cube. Stir briefly. Express orange peel over drink and drop in.

The name emerged in the mid-19th century. As bartenders created increasingly elaborate drinks, customers began requesting their whiskey "the old-fashioned way." The Pendennis Club in Louisville claims credit for popularizing the drink in 1881, supposedly creating it for Colonel James E. Pepper, who brought it to New York's Waldorf Astoria.

Louisville has since embraced the Old Fashioned as its official cocktail—fitting for a city surrounded by bourbon country. Avoid muddling fruit into this drink—that's a mid-century deviation from the classic. The orange peel expressed over the surface provides sufficient citrus character.

## Mint Julep

The quintessential Southern cocktail, the Mint Julep combines bourbon with fresh mint and sugar over crushed ice — pure refreshment in the summer heat.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz rye whiskey (or bourbon)
- 1/4 oz simple syrup
- 1 sugar cube
- 6-8 fresh mint leaves
- Mint sprig for garnish

Place mint and sugar cube in julep cup or highball glass. Gently muddle to release mint oils without shredding leaves. Add whiskey and simple syrup. Pack glass with crushed ice. Stir until frost forms on outside. Crown with more crushed ice. Add mint sprig.

The word "julep" comes from Persian gulab (rosewater), describing medicinal syrups used to mask bitter medicine. By the 18th century, American juleps had evolved into morning tonics combining spirits with mint and sugar.

The Mint Julep became deeply intertwined with Southern identity as bourbon production centered in Kentucky. It became the official drink of the Kentucky Derby in 1938—approximately 120,000 are served during Derby weekend. Traditionally served in silver cups, which frost beautifully and enhance the cooling sensation.

## Whiskey Highball

The simplest whiskey cocktail, elevated to an art form by Japanese bartenders who treat every element—ice, carbonation, proportion—with meticulous care.

### Recipe:

- 1.5 oz blended whiskey
- 4 oz cold soda water
- Lemon twist (optional)

Fill highball glass with ice. Add whiskey. Add soda gently down the side of the glass. Stir once vertically. Serve immediately.

What Americans might dismiss as "whiskey and soda," Japanese bartenders elevated to an art form requiring specific ice, careful proportions, and exact technique. The secret lies in maintaining carbonation. Japanese highball preparation minimizes stirring—one vertical stroke to integrate, nothing more. The whiskey should be chilled before mixing. The soda should be freshly opened. The ice should be dense and clear.

## Horse's Neck

A refreshing whiskey highball with ginger ale and bitters, named for the long spiral of lemon peel that drapes over the rim like a horse's neck.

### Recipe:

- 1.5 oz bourbon (or rye)
- 3 dashes Angostura bitters
- 1 dash orange bitters
- Ginger ale to top
- Long lemon spiral for garnish

Build in highball glass over ice. Top with ginger ale. Drape lemon spiral over rim.

Originally a non-alcoholic drink comprising ginger ale and lemon peel, this became a cocktail by the 1910s when spirits were added. "Horse's Neck with a kick" specified the boozy version. The drink gained particular popularity in the British Royal Navy, eventually replacing the Pink Gin among officers. It appears in Ian Fleming's James Bond novels — Bond orders one in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*.

# Intermediate

## Manhattan

The first truly modern cocktail, combining whiskey with vermouth to create a template that would define countless drinks to follow.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz rye whiskey
- 1 oz sweet vermouth
- 4-6 dashes Angostura bitters
- Maraschino cherry for garnish

Stir with ice for 20-30 seconds. Strain into chilled coupe.

The most popular origin story credits the Manhattan Club in New York City around 1874, supposedly for a banquet hosted by Jennie Jerome (Winston Churchill's mother). However, Lady Randolph Churchill was in France and pregnant at the time, making the story improbable.

More likely, the drink emerged organically in New York's bars during the 1860s or 1870s, eventually taking its name from the borough.

The Manhattan became one of the first "modern cocktails" because it moved beyond the simple spirit-sugar-bitters formula, creating sophisticated balance between whiskey and vermouth.

**Variations:** Dry Manhattan uses dry vermouth; Perfect Manhattan uses equal parts sweet and dry.

## Boulevardier

A Negroni built on whiskey rather than gin—bitter, complex, and possibly predating its more famous cousin.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/4 oz rye whiskey
- 1 oz Campari
- 1 oz sweet vermouth
- Orange peel for garnish

Stir with ice. Strain into coupe or over a large ice cube in rocks glass. Express orange peel over drink.

Erskine Gwynne, an American writer and socialite living in Paris, created this drink in the late 1920s. Gwynne founded a magazine called *Boulevardier* (French for "a man about town"), and the cocktail took its name from the publication. Harry McElhone published the recipe in his 1927 *Barflies and Cocktails*, crediting Gwynne.

After being largely forgotten for decades, the Boulevardier experienced a resurgence during the craft cocktail revival of the 2000s. It became an IBA official cocktail in 2020.

## Penicillin

A modern classic that achieved canonical status within years of its creation—Scotch, honey, ginger, and a smoky float.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz blended Scotch
- 3/4 oz lemon juice
- 3/8 oz honey syrup
- 3/8 oz ginger syrup
- Float of Islay Scotch (optional)
- Candied ginger for garnish

Shake all ingredients except Islay Scotch with ice. Strain into rocks glass over fresh ice. Float 1/4 oz Islay Scotch on top.

Created in 2005 by Australian bartender Sam Ross at Milk & Honey in New York, the Penicillin demonstrates how quickly a well-constructed drink can achieve classic status. Ross developed it as a variation on the Gold Rush, substituting Scotch for bourbon and adding ginger. The name — a playful reference to the cocktail's perceived "cure-all" properties — also nods to Alexander Fleming, the Scottish scientist who discovered penicillin. The float of peaty Islay Scotch adds smoky complexity without overwhelming the drink.

## New York Sour

A whiskey sour crowned with a dramatic red wine float—visual drama meets flavor complexity.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz bourbon
- 3/4 oz lemon juice
- 3/4 oz simple syrup
- 1 egg white (optional)
- Red wine float

If using egg white, dry shake all ingredients first. Then shake with ice. Strain into rocks glass over fresh ice. Slowly pour red wine over the back of a spoon to create float.

Despite its name, the New York Sour likely originated in Chicago around the 1880s. It went by several names — Continental Sour, Southern Whiskey Sour, Claret Snap— before "New York Sour" stuck. The name probably reflects New York bartenders popularizing rather than inventing the drink. The combination works beautifully: wine's tannins complement whiskey's oak influence, while its acidity echoes the lemon.

## Sazerac

New Orleans' official cocktail—rye whiskey with Peychaud's bitters in an absinthe-rinsed glass. A city's history in a single drink.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz rye whiskey
- 1 oz simple syrup (or 1 sugar cube)
- 6 dashes Peychaud's bitters
- Absinthe or Herbsaint rinse
- Lemon peel for garnish

Rinse a chilled rocks glass with absinthe; discard excess. In mixing glass, muddle sugar with bitters and a splash of water. Add rye and ice. Stir until well-chilled. Strain into prepared glass (neat, no ice). Express lemon peel over drink.

The story begins around 1838 with Antoine Amédée Peychaud, a Creole apothecary who created his signature bitters and combined them with Sazerac de Forge et Fils cognac. By 1850, the drink's popularity warranted the opening of the Sazerac Coffee House. The 1870s phylloxera epidemic led to cognac shortages; Thomas Handy substituted American rye whiskey.

In 1873, bartender Leon Lamothe added absinthe. When absinthe was banned in 1912, Herbsaint (a New Orleans anise liqueur) took its place.

## Rob Roy

A Manhattan made with Scotch—the blended whisky's smoke and grain notes replacing rye's spice for an entirely different drink.

### Recipe:

- 1 oz Scotch
- 1/2 oz sweet vermouth
- 1/2 oz dry vermouth
- Dash Angostura bitters
- Cherry for garnish

Stir with ice. Strain into chilled coupe.

The cocktail was created in 1894 at New York's Waldorf Astoria, timed to coincide with the premiere of an operetta called Rob Roy, based on the Scottish folk hero Robert RoyMacGregor. The Waldorf's bartender saw a marketing opportunity and seized it. Like the Manhattan, the Rob Roy can be made sweet (with sweet vermouth), dry (with dry vermouth), or perfect (with both). This recipe follows the "perfect" style.

## Brown Derby

A Hollywood Golden Age bourbon sour where grapefruit and honey create something both familiar and distinctive.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz bourbon
- 1 oz grapefruit juice
- 1/2 oz honey syrup
- Orange peel for garnish

Shake with ice. Strain into chilled coupe. Express orange peel over surface.

The drink was created in the 1930s at the Vendôme Club on Sunset Boulevard, owned by Hollywood Reporter founder Billy Wilkerson. Despite its creation elsewhere, the cocktail was named after the iconic Brown Derby restaurant, a celebrity haunt famous for its hat-shaped architecture. Some historians note that a nearly identical recipe called the "De Rigueur" appeared in the 1930 Savoy Cocktail Book—the Brown Derby may have been inspired by or borrowed from this earlier drink.

## Blood and Sand

One of the few classic cocktails built on Scotch, named for the 1922 Rudolph Valentino bullfighting film.

### Recipe:

- 3/4 oz Scotch
- 3/4 oz Cherry Heering
- 3/4 oz sweet vermouth
- 3/4 oz orange juice
- Orange peel or cherry for garnish

Shake with ice. Strain into chilled coupe.

The ingredients supposedly evoke the movie's imagery: cherry liqueur provides the blood, Scotch the sand. The recipe first appeared in Harry Craddock's 1930 Savoy Cocktail Book, though it likely predates publication. The equal-parts construction makes it easy to remember; the combination of Scotch, cherry, citrus, and vermouth sounds unlikely but works remarkably well.

## Rusty Nail

Scotch and Drambuie—a simple two-ingredient stirred drink that became a Rat Pack favorite.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz Scotch
- 1 oz Drambuie
- Lemon peel for garnish

Stir with ice. Strain over fresh ice in rocks glass. Express lemon peel over surface.

The Rusty Nail achieved fame at New York's 21 Club during the 1950s and 60s. Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, and Sammy Davis Jr. helped establish its sophisticated image. The drink first appeared at the British Industries Fair in New York in 1937, originally called the B.I.F. It went by several names—Knucklehead, Little Club No. 1, D&S—before "Rusty Nail" stuck. The Drambuie Liqueur Company officially endorsed the name in 1963.

## Gold Rush

A Whiskey Sour with honey instead of simple syrup—a small change that creates a modern classic.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz bourbon
- 3/4 oz lemon juice
- 3/4 oz honey syrup
- Lemon twist for garnish

Shake with ice. Strain into rocks glass over fresh ice.

Another Milk & Honey creation, the Gold Rush emerged in the early 2000s from bartender T.J. Siegal. He reportedly chose the name because he preferred names that "evoke a feeling or achuckle" rather than hidden meanings—though the drink's golden color makes the name apt regardless.

The Gold Rush inspired Sam Ross's Penicillin, which substituted Scotch for bourbon and added ginger. Both drinks show the productive innovation happening at Milk & Honey during the cocktail revival.

# Advanced

## Vieux Carré

New Orleans in a glass—rye, cognac, vermouth, Bénédictine, and two kinds of bitters layered into remarkable complexity.

### Recipe:

- 1 oz rye whiskey
- 1 oz cognac
- 1 oz sweet vermouth
- 1 barspoon Bénédictine
- 2 dashes Angostura bitters
- 2 dashes Peychaud's bitters
- Orange peel and cherry for garnish

Stir all ingredients with ice. Strain into rocks glass over fresh ice.

Invented in 1938 by Walter Bergeron at the Hotel Monteleone's Carousel Bar, the Vieux Carré was designed as a tribute to the French Quarter (Vieux Carré means "old square" in French).

Bergeron intended each ingredient to represent a different community in the culturally diverse Quarter: cognac and Bénédictine for the French, rye whiskey for the Americans, sweet vermouth for the Italians, and bitters for the Caribbean community. The result is more complex than any single-spirit cocktail — layers of flavor that reveal themselves across the drinking experience.

## Paper Plane

An equal-parts modern classic — bourbon, Aperol, Amaro Nonino, and lemon in perfect balance.

### Recipe:

- 3/4 oz bourbon
- 3/4 oz Aperol
- 3/4 oz Amaro Nonino
- 3/4 oz lemon juice

Shake with ice. Double strain into chilled coupe.

Created in 2008 by Sam Ross (who also gave us the Penicillin) for Toby Maloney's Chicago bar,

The Violet Hour. Ross named the drink after M.I.A.'s "Paper Planes," a song he and Sasha Petraske frequently played while developing recipes. He originally used Campari but found Aperol's sweeter profile better suited the build. The Paper Plane was added to the IBA's official cocktail list in 2020 — remarkably fast recognition for a 21st-century creation.

## Tipperary

A rare classic cocktail built on Irish whiskey, combining it with sweet vermouth and green Chartreuse.

### Recipe:

- 1.5 oz Irish whiskey
- 3/4 oz sweet vermouth
- 3/4 oz green Chartreuse
- 2 dashes orange bitters
- Orange peel for garnish

Stir with ice. Strain into chilled coupe. Express orange peel over surface.

It first appeared in Hugo Ensslin's 1916 *Recipes for Mixed Drinks*, coinciding with the popularity of "It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary," the wartime song that became an anthem for Irish soldiers during World War I. The original recipe called for equal parts — a bold proportion that modern palates might find challenging. This version increases the whiskey ratio for better balance while maintaining the drink's distinctive herbal character.

## Godfather

Scotch and amaretto—two ingredients stirred with ice, named for Coppola's 1972 film.

### Recipe:

- 1 oz Scotch
- 1 oz amaretto

Stir with ice. Strain into rocks glass over fresh ice.

The Godfather trades on associations with Italian-American culture and masculine sophistication. Whether Marlon Brando actually drank them remains uncertain, but the legend persists. The drink gained popularity at Studio 54 and similar disco-era establishments, and was reportedly a Rat Pack favorite. The recipe couldn't be simpler, which means ingredient quality matters enormously. Use a Scotch you'd happily sip neat.

**Variations:** Godmother substitutes vodka for Scotch; French Connection uses cognac.

## Beyond These 19: Continuing Your Whiskey Journey

The drinks in this chapter establish whiskey's fundamental cocktail vocabulary. The Old Fashioned teaches spirit-forward construction. The Whiskey Sour demonstrates the sour formula. The Manhattan introduces vermouth. The Boulevardier shows what happens when you substitute base spirits in established templates. The Penicillin illustrates how small innovations can create instant classics.

From here, countless variations await:

**Exploring Rye's Spice:** The Algonquin (rye, dry vermouth, pineapple juice) marries rye's assertiveness with tropical brightness. The Scofflaw (rye, dry vermouth, lemon, grenadine, orange bitters) was reportedly created to mock Prohibition supporters. The Ward Eight (rye, lemon, orange juice, grenadine), named for a Boston political district, balances multiple citrus elements against rye's backbone.

**Bourbon's Sweet Side:** The Kentucky Mule applies Moscow Mule construction to bourbon, with ginger beer and lime creating refreshment. The Bourbon Smash transforms the Mint Julep into a citrus-forward shaken drink. The Lion's Tail (bourbon, lime, allspice dram, bitters) showcases bourbon with Caribbean spice.

**Scotch Beyond the Rob Roy:** The Bobby Burns adds Bénédictine to the Rob Roy formula, creating herbal complexity named for Scotland's national poet. The Cameron's Kick combines Irish and Scotch whiskeys with lemon and orgeat—an unusual but harmonious blend. The Mamie Taylor (Scotch, lime, ginger beer) offers Scotch in highball form.

**Irish Innovations:** The Emerald (Irish whiskey, sweet

vermouth, orange bitters) offers a gentler Manhattan cousin. The Tipperary shows Irish whiskey can stand up to Chartreuse. The modern revival of Irish pot still whiskey has inspired bartenders to explore this category more deeply. **Modern Classics:** The Kentucky Buck (bourbon, lemon, simple syrup, ginger beer, strawberry, bitters) shows whiskey in refreshing mode. The Final Ward applies Last Word equal-parts logic to rye. The Industry Sour (rye, Fernet-Branca, lemon, simple syrup) has become a bartender handshake. The Toronto (rye, Fernet-Branca, simple syrup, Angostura) preceded it, showing bartenders' long-standing affection for bitter Italian amari with whiskey.

**Template Variations:** Once you understand a template, substitution becomes intuitive. The Negroni template (spirit, Campari, sweet vermouth) yields the Boulevardier with bourbon and the Old Pal with rye and dry vermouth. The sour template creates the Whiskey Sour, the Gold Rush (with honey), the Brown Derby (with grapefruit), the New York Sour (with wine float). The Old Fashioned template applies to any aged spirit — rum, tequila, brandy.

**Building Your Technique:** Whiskey cocktails teach fundamental skills. Stirring the Manhattan develops your feel for proper dilution. Building an Old Fashioned teaches the importance of muddling sugar correctly. The New York Sour introduces the float technique. Mastering these builds transfers to countless other drinks.

The current enthusiasm for American whiskey shows no signs of slowing. Craft distilleries experiment with unusual grains, unique barrel treatments, and regional terroir. Bartenders respond with drinks that showcase these new expressions. The dialogue between spirit and cocktail continues as it has for two centuries.

What remains constant is whiskey's essential nature: time captured in a bottle, complexity that rewards attention, depth that anchors whatever surrounds it. The charred oak that colors bourbon, the peat smoke that defines Islay Scotch, the triple distillation that smooths Irish whiskey—

these techniques evolved over generations, and we're still learning what they can contribute to the cocktail glass.

These nineteen drinks demonstrate whiskey's range—from the simple elegance of the Old Fashioned to the layered complexity of the Vieux Carré. The variations you'll discover — or invent — will demonstrate your own.



# **Chapter 5: Tequila & Mezcal - The Agave Revolution**

No spirit has undergone a more dramatic transformation in cocktail culture than tequila. Within living memory, it was the stuff of regrettable shots—cheap, harsh, something to endure rather than enjoy. Today, premium tequilas command the respect once reserved for aged Scotch and fine cognac. Mezcal, tequila's smoky cousin, has emerged from obscurity to become the spirit of choice for adventurous bartenders worldwide.

This revolution reflects changing tastes and improving quality. Modern tequila production has embraced craft methods, longer aging, and careful attention to terroir. What arrives in your glass bears little resemblance to the harsh spirits that gave the category its unfortunate reputation.

The fifteen drinks in this chapter trace agave spirits from classic Mexican cocktails to cutting-edge modern creations. From the iconic Margarita to Phil Ward's Division Bell, they demonstrate both tequila's versatility and mezcal's distinctive character.

## **Blue Fire: The History of Agave Spirits**

The story of tequila begins long before European contact. Indigenous peoples of central Mexico fermented the sap of agave plants into pulque, a mildly alcoholic beverage, for thousands of years. When Spanish conquistadors arrived in the 16th century, they brought distillation technology and a thirst for spirits stronger than pulque could provide.

The marriage of European technique and Mexican raw

materials created mezcal—and eventually, its most famous variety, tequila.

### **The Birth of Tequila**

All tequila is mezcal, but not all mezcal is tequila. The distinction lies in geography and variety:

tequila must be produced in designated regions (primarily the state of Jalisco) and made exclusively from blue Weber agave. Mezcal can come from various regions and use any of dozens of agave varieties.

The town of Tequila in Jalisco gave the spirit its name. By the late 18th century, commercial production had begun, and the first license for tequila production was granted to José María Guadalupe de Cuervo in 1795. The Cuervo distillery remains one of the largest today.

Tequila evolved through the 19th and 20th centuries, with quality varying widely. The worst examples—mixto tequilas made with only 51% agave and supplemented with cane sugar — fueled the spirit's poor reputation abroad. Better examples remained largely in Mexico, where tequila held deep cultural significance.

### **The American Discovery**

Tequila crossed the border consistently by the mid-20th century, but usually not in its best form.

The Margarita emerged sometime in the 1930s or 1940s—the exact origin remains disputed — but it spread primarily through Mexican border towns and eventually to American bars. The frozen Margarita machine, invented in 1971, turned the drink into a mass-market phenomenon, though often with cheap mixto tequila and artificial mixes.

The Tequila Sunrise found fame in the 1970s after Mick Jagger discovered it during the Rolling Stones' 1972 tour. The Eagles wrote a song about it; Jose Cuervo printed the recipe on bottles.

This was tequila entering pop culture—not yet respected, but undeniably popular.

## **The Premium Revolution**

The transformation began in the 1990s as 100% agave tequilas gained market share. Producers recognized that quality-focused consumers would pay premium prices for superior spirits. New expressions emerged: extended aging, innovative cask treatments, estate-grown agave. Celebrities discovered that tequila brands could be lucrative investments; more importantly, they brought attention to craft production.

By the 2010s, tequila had achieved genuine respectability. The category grew faster than any other spirit segment. Premium expressions outsold cheap mixtos. Bartenders stopped hiding tequila behind sweetness and began showcasing it in spirit-forward drinks.

## **Mezcal's Emergence**

While tequila conquered the mainstream, mezcal built a cult following. Artisanal mezcal production—often using traditional methods like pit-roasting agave hearts and clay-pot distillation—created spirits with extraordinary complexity. The smokiness came from those roasting pits, where piñas cooked over wood fires for days before fermentation.

Phil Ward, opening Mayahuel in New York in 2007, demonstrated that mezcal could anchor sophisticated cocktails. The Division Bell, the Oaxaca Old Fashioned, and similar drinks showed bartenders a new palette of flavors to explore. By the mid-2010s, mezcal appeared on serious cocktail menus worldwide.

Today, both spirits continue evolving. Tequila production faces sustainability challenges as demand outpaces agave supply. Mezcal grapples with how to scale artisanal methods without sacrificing quality. The dialogue between tradition and innovation continues.

# Understanding Agave Spirits

## Tequila Categories

Tequila comes in several expressions, each with different applications: Blanco (or silver/plata) is unaged or rested briefly (up to 60 days). This is tequila in its purest form—the agave character comes through clearly, with vegetal, citrus, and pepper notes.

Blancos make the best Margaritas and most fresh cocktails.

Reposado ("rested") ages 2-12 months in oak. The wood softens agave's edges and adds vanilla, caramel, and spice notes. Reposados work beautifully in aged-spirit cocktails like Old Fashioneds or where you want some oak influence.

Añejo ages 1-3 years, developing deeper color and more pronounced wood character. These are sipping tequilas first, but they can work in spirit-forward cocktails.

Extra Añejo ages more than 3 years. These are typically too expensive and nuanced for mixing.

Always look for "100% agave" on labels. Mixto tequilas (which can contain up to 49% non-agave sugars) produce inferior results in cocktails.

## Mezcal Character

Mezcal's signature smoke comes from roasting agave hearts in underground pits lined with hot rocks. This process caramelizes sugars while infusing the piñas with wood smoke.

The intensity varies by producer and agave variety. Espadín is the most common agave variety in mezcal, accounting for roughly 90% of production. It offers reliable quality and balanced smoke — a good starting point for cocktails.

Tobalá, Tobaziche, Madre cuixe, and other wild varieties produce more complex, often more expensive mezcals. These are typically better appreciated neat than in cocktails.

For mixing, choose mezcals with moderate smoke that won't overwhelm other ingredients.

Save the most distinctive expressions for sipping.

## The Agave Shelf

Building an agave collection starts with versatility:

**Blanco Tequila (Essential):** The foundation of tequila cocktails. Choose a 100% agave expression with clean agave flavor and good citrus notes. Espolón, Olmeca Altos, and Cimarron offer excellent cocktail performance at reasonable prices. Save Fortaleza or Siete Leguas for more showcase applications.

**Reposado Tequila (Recommended):** When you want more depth. The Tommy's Margarita often benefits from reposado's complexity. The same producers making good blancos typically make good reposados.

**Mezcal (Recommended):** Start with a moderately smoky espadín-based mezcal. Del Maguey Vida, Banhez, or Montelobos provide accessible entry points. Once you understand the category, explore producers like Vago, Rey Campero, or El Jolgorio.

# Easy

## Margarita

The world's most popular cocktail—tequila, lime, and orange liqueur in perfect balance.

### Recipe:

2 oz blanco tequila

3/4 oz fresh lime juice

3/4 oz Cointreau

Salt rim and lime wheel for garnish

Shake with ice. Double strain into chilled coupe or rocks glass with fresh ice. Salt rim optional — half-rim allows choice.

The Margarita is perhaps the most debated cocktail origin. Dozens of people claim credit, and the truth likely involves independent creation at multiple Mexican border establishments between the 1930s and 1950s. The name means "daisy" in Spanish, and the drink may have evolved from the Brandy Daisy. By the 1950s, the Margarita had arrived in American consciousness, appearing in *Esquire* magazine in 1953. The frozen Margarita machine (1971) expanded reach while often sacrificing quality. The craft cocktail revival restored the drink to its proper form.

## Paloma

Mexico's true national cocktail—tequila, lime, and grapefruit soda in a refreshing highball.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz blanco tequila
- 1/2 oz fresh lime juice
- Pinch of salt
- 4-6 oz grapefruit soda (Squirt or similar)
- Lime wheel for garnish

Build in highball glass over ice. Add tequila and lime juice. Top with grapefruit soda. Stir gently.

While Americans drink Margaritas, Mexicans drink Palomas. The name means "dove" in Spanish, possibly referring to the folk song "La Paloma" or the drink's pale color. Origins are murky; Don Javier Delgado Corona of La Capilla is sometimes credited, though he denied it.

The combination makes perfect sense: grapefruit's bitterness tempers tequila's intensity while lime provides acid balance.

**Note:** For a fresh version, substitute 2 oz fresh grapefruit juice plus 2 oz soda water for the grapefruit soda.

## Tequila Sunrise

Visual drama in a glass—grenadine sinks through orange juice, creating the gradient sunrise effect.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz blanco tequila
- 4 oz fresh orange juice
- 1/2 oz grenadine
- Orange slice and cherry for garnish

Build in highball glass. Add tequila and orange juice over ice. Slowly pour grenadine down the inside of the glass—it will sink and rise, creating the sunrise effect. Don't stir.

The Tequila Sunrise exists in two forms. The original, created at the Arizona Biltmore Hotel in the 1930s or 40s, combined tequila with crème de cassis, lime, and soda. The modern version emerged from Sausalito's Trident bar in the early 1970s.

Mick Jagger discovered it during the Rolling Stones' 1972 American tour. The band's enthusiasm spread the drink worldwide; Jose Cuervo began printing the recipe on bottles in 1973.

## Batanga

Don Javier's legendary creation—tequila, lime, and Coca-Cola, stirred with a knife.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz blanco tequila
- 3/4 oz fresh lime juice4 oz Coca-Cola
- Salt for rim
- Lime wedge for garnish

Salt rim of highball glass. Add ice, tequila, and lime juice. Top with Coca-Cola. Stir gently — traditionally with a knife.

Don Javier Delgado Corona served his signature drink at La Capilla in Tequila, Jalisco for nearly 60 years. The name came from a rotund regular customer ("batanga" roughly translates to "chubby" in local slang). The preparation became ritual: Don Javier stirred every Batanga with the same knife he used to cut limes. He continued this practice into his nineties, until his death in 2020 at age 96. The Batanga exploded on TikTok in 2024-2025, proving that great cocktails don't require complexity.

## Tommy's Margarita

A streamlined Margarita using agave nectar instead of orange liqueur—letting the tequila shine.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz reposado tequila (or blanco)
- 3/4 oz fresh lime juice
- 1/2 oz agave syrup
- 3 drops saline solution (optional but recommended)

Shake with ice. Double strain into chilled coupe.

Julio Bermejo created this in the early 1990s at his family's Tommy's Mexican Restaurant in San Francisco. His philosophy—"respecting the agave"—drove the change. Triple sec masks agave flavor; agave nectar complements it. The Tommy's Margarita became the first venue-specific cocktail recognized by the International Bartenders Association (2008).

# Intermediate

## El Diablo

A devilishly refreshing highball—tequila meets crème de cassis, lime, and ginger beer.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz reposado tequila
- 3/4 oz fresh lime juice
- 1/2 oz crème de cassis
- 1/4 oz simple syrup
- 3 dashes Angostura bitters
- Ginger beer to top
- Mint sprig for garnish

Shake all ingredients except ginger beer with ice. Strain into highball glass over fresh ice. Top with ginger beer.

The El Diablo appeared in Trader Vic's 1946 Book of Food and Drink as the "Mexican El Diablo"—one of the earliest tequila cocktails in American print. The reddish color from cassis might suggest something infernal, but the flavor is balanced and refreshing. Cassis adds berry sweetness; ginger adds spice; lime ties everything together.

## Siesta

A tequila twist on the Hemingway Daiquiri, using Campari instead of maraschino.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz blanco tequila
- 1/2 oz fresh lime juice
- 1/2 oz fresh grapefruit juice
- 1/2 oz Campari
- 1/2 oz simple syrup
- 2 dashes Angostura bitters
- Orange peel for garnish

Shake with ice. Double strain into chilled coupe. Express orange peel over surface.

Katie Stipe created the Siesta in 2006 at New York's Flatiron Lounge. Campari's bitterness balances grapefruit's natural tartness while blanco tequila's vegetal character adds complexity.

The drink's recognition grew through bartender networks and its appearance in the Speed Rack competition.

## Mexican Firing Squad Special

A pre-Prohibition era tequila sour with grenadine and bitters—more complex than the later Tequila Sunrise.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz blanco tequila
- 3/4 oz fresh lime juice
- 3/4 oz grenadine
- 2 dashes Angostura bitters
- Soda water to top
- Orange peel for garnish

Shake tequila, lime juice, grenadine, and bitters with ice. Strain into highball glass over fresh ice. Top with soda water.

Travel writer Charles H. Baker documented this cocktail in his 1939 *Gentleman's Companion*, claiming to have discovered it at La Cucaracha Cocktail Club in Mexico City in 1937.

During Prohibition, Mexico City bars thrived on American expats seeking quality drinks. Angostura bitters transform what could be simple into something layered.

## Oaxaca Old Fashioned

Phil Ward's revolutionary split-base Old Fashioned—tequila and mezcal together with agave syrup.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz reposado tequila
- 1/2 oz mezcal
- 1 barspoon agave syrup
- 2 dashes Angostura bitters
- Orange peel for garnish

Stir all ingredients with ice. Strain into rocks glass over large ice cube. Express orange peel over surface and drop in.

Created at Death & Co. in New York around 2007, this drink helped launch mezcal into modern cocktail consciousness. Using mezcal alone would overwhelm; using tequila alone lacks distinctiveness. Together, they create something with mezcal's signature smoke tempered by tequila's cleaner agave character.

Ward's subsequent opening of Mayahuel proved that agave spirits could support an entire cocktail program.

## Division Bell

Equal-parts mezcal cocktail applying Last Word logic—mezcal, Aperol, maraschino, and lime.

### Recipe:

- 1 oz mezcal
- 3/4 oz Aperol
- 1/2 oz maraschino liqueur
- 3/4 oz fresh lime juice
- Grapefruit twist for garnish

Shake with ice. Double strain into chilled coupe.

Phil Ward created this at Mayahuel in 2009, naming it after Pink Floyd's 1994 album—which he played repeatedly while constructing the bar.

The Division Bell was significant in demonstrating mezcal's cocktail versatility. Aperol's bittersweet orange character complements mezcal's smoke without competing.

## Naked and Famous

Equal parts mezcal, Aperol, yellow Chartreuse, and lime—bold, balanced, and unapologetic.

### Recipe:

- 3/4 oz mezcal
- 3/4 oz Aperol
- 3/4 oz yellow Chartreuse
- 3/4 oz fresh lime juice

Shake with ice. Double strain into chilled coupe.

Joaquín Simó created this at Death & Co. in 2011, describing it as "the bastard child born out of an illicit Oaxacan love affair between the classic Last Word and the Paper Plane." The name comes from the 1996 Tricky song "Tricky Kid." Yellow Chartreuse—less intense than its green sibling—proves essential; green would overwhelm the smoke.

## Tequila Matador

A tropical Margarita variation—tequila with pineapple and lime, blended frozen.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz blanco tequila
- 2 oz pineapple juice
- 3/4 oz fresh lime juice

Blend with crushed ice. Pour into highball glass.
---

Two distinct recipes share this name. The earlier version appeared in the 1937 *Café Royal Cocktail Book* — tequila, dry vermouth, and orange curaçao in an apéritif style. This tropical version was published in *Trader Vic's 1972 Bartender's Guide*, offering a simple Margarita variation with pineapple juice replacing other ingredients.

The combination of popular Mexican exports—tequila, pineapple, and lime—suggests possible Mexican origins.

# Advanced

## Spicy Jalapeño Margarita

Fresh chile heat meets classic Margarita—the drink that made spicy cocktails mainstream.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz blanco tequila
- 1 oz orange liqueur
- 1 oz fresh lime juice
- 1/2 oz agave syrup
- 2-3 jalapeño slices
- Tajín for rim
- Jalapeño slice and lime wheel for garnish

Muddle jalapeño in shaker. Add remaining ingredients and ice. Shake vigorously. Strain into Tajín-rimmed rocks glass over fresh ice.

Fresh chile heat in cocktails became mainstream in the 2020s, with the jalapeño Margarita leading the trend. Two methods dominate: muddling fresh jalapeño directly in the shaker or using jalapeño-infused tequila. Tajín—the Mexican chile-lime-salt seasoning—has largely replaced plain salt on spicy Margarita rims, adding another dimension of heat and complexity.

## Part-Time Lover

A sophisticated tequila sour with Aperol and elderflower—Los Angeles cocktail culture at its finest.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz blanco tequila
- 1/2 oz Aperol
- 1/2 oz elderflower liqueur
- 3/4 oz fresh lemon juice
- 2 dashes Angostura bitters
- Grapefruit twist for garnish

Shake with ice. Strain over fresh ice in rocks glass. Express grapefruit peel over surface.

Jon Weimorts created this at Idle Hour in Los Angeles, demonstrating that blanco tequila can anchor aperitif-style drinks as effectively as gin or vodka. The name—referencing Stevie Wonder's 1985 hit—suggests the drink's casual versatility: appropriate for many occasions rather than one specific moment.

## Nice & Toasty

A spirit-forward stirred tequila drink with Cocchi Americano and Bénédictine—proof that tequila belongs in whiskey territory.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz blanco tequila
- 1 oz Cocchi Americano
- 1/2 oz Bénédictine
- 8 dashes grapefruit bitters
- Flamed grapefruit twist for garnish

Stir all ingredients with ice until well-chilled. Strain into chilled coupe. Flame grapefruit twist over drink.

This winter-appropriate cocktail from @holycityhandcraft, featured by The Educated Barfly, proves tequila can work in spirit-forward, stirred drinks typically reserved for whiskey or gin. The flamed grapefruit garnish — heating the peel to caramelize oils before expressing them — adds theatrical presentation and genuine flavor complexity.

## Beyond These 15: Continuing Your Agave Journey

The drinks in this chapter demonstrate agave spirits' remarkable range—from refreshing highballs to spirit-forward stirred cocktails, from classic Mexican serves to modern American innovations.

**Margarita Variations:** The template (tequila + citrus + orange liqueur) invites endless modification. Substitute grapefruit for lime. Add fresh fruit—strawberry, mango, watermelon.

Split the base with mezcal. The framework accommodates creativity while maintaining balance.

**Mezcal Exploration:** Beyond the cocktails here, mezcal works in many gin applications. A Mezcal Negroni (equal parts mezcal, Campari, sweet vermouth) adds smoke to the classic. The Mezcal Mule brings smoke to ginger beer. Experiment with smoke intensity—some mezcals overwhelm, others integrate beautifully.

**Tequila in Spirit-Forward Drinks:** The Oaxaca Old Fashioned opened doors. Try tequila in Manhattan variations, in stirred drinks with amaros, in templates designed for whiskey. The agave character often complements bitter Italian ingredients.

**Modern Innovation:** Bartenders continue pushing boundaries. Sous-vide infusions, fat-washing, clarified citrus — these techniques find new applications with agave spirits. The category remains fertile ground for experimentation.

**Sustainability Considerations:** Agave takes years to mature; current demand strains supply.

Supporting producers committed to sustainable practices

matters for the category's future.

Some mezcal certifications (like the CRM) ensure traditional methods and fair compensation for producers.

The agave revolution shows no signs of slowing. What was once dismissed as harsh party fuel has become one of the cocktail world's most exciting spirits. These fifteen drinks provide vocabulary; the conversations you'll have with tequila and mezcal extend far beyond what any book can capture.





# Chapter 6: Brandy & Cognac - The Refined Spirit

Brandy represents cocktail culture at its most elegant. Distilled from fruit—usually grapes, but also apples, pears, and other produce—brandy carries the essence of its origin through distillation and aging. Cognac, brandy's most prestigious expression, must come from a specific French region and adhere to centuries-old production standards.

Together, these spirits anchor some of the cocktail canon's most sophisticated drinks.

Where vodka disappears into cocktails and rum announces tropical intentions, brandy brings refined complexity. Its grape-based richness, enhanced by oak aging, creates depth that supports elaborate constructions while rewarding simple preparations equally. The Sidecar demonstrates this perfectly: just three ingredients achieve remarkable sophistication.

The fourteen drinks in this chapter span three centuries of cocktail history. From the pre-Civil War Fish House Punch to modern variations like the Limoncello Sidecar, they demonstrate brandy's enduring relevance.

## From Grape to Glass: The History of Brandy

The word "brandy" derives from the Dutch brandewijn ("burnt wine"), reflecting the spirit's origins in 15th-century trade. Dutch merchants discovered that distilling wine reduced shipping volume while preserving—and concentrating—the wine's essence. What began as practical commerce became an art form.

### Cognac's Emergence

The Cognac region of southwestern France developed its

distinctive style through accident and intention. The region's thin, acidic wines proved poorly suited for direct consumption but excellent for distillation. Double distillation in copper pot stills—required by law since the 17<sup>th</sup> century—creates Cognac's signature smoothness.

Aging in Limousin or Tronçais oak became standard practice. The cool, humid cellars of Cognac—where angels' share evaporates slowly—allow extended maturation. VS (Very Special) indicates at least two years; VSOP (Very Superior Old Pale) at least four; XO (Extra Old) at least ten, though many producers age far longer.

By the 18th century, Cognac had achieved international prestige. The great houses—Hennessy (founded 1765), Martell (1715), Rémy Martin (1724), Courvoisier (1809)—built global distribution networks. Cognac became the preferred spirit of European aristocracy and American high society alike.

### **Brandy Beyond France**

While Cognac dominates prestige markets, brandy production spans the globe. Armagnac, from Gascony, predates Cognac and offers more rustic, assertive character. Spanish brandy from Jerez uses the solera system borrowed from sherry production. American brandy — particularly from California — developed its own identity.

Pisco deserves special attention. This South American grape brandy, produced in Peru and Chile, anchors one of the world's great cocktails (the Pisco Sour). Unaged and crystal-clear, pisco offers grape flavor without oak influence — a different expression of distilled wine.

Apple brandy represents another important branch. American applejack — originally made by freeze-distillation in colonial New Jersey — became one of the country's first native spirits.

French calvados, from Normandy, ages in oak like Cognac but carries apple's distinctive sweetness and acidity.

## **Brandy and the Golden Age**

The golden age of cocktails (roughly 1860-1920) relied heavily on brandy. Jerry Thomas's 1862 *Bar-Tender's Guide* features brandy throughout—the Brandy Crusta, the Japanese Cocktail, various punches and flips. The spirit's prestige made it the default for sophisticated preparations.

The Sidecar emerged around World War I, debuting in either London or Paris (both cities claim credit). The combination—Cognac, orange liqueur, lemon juice—became a template for

countless variations. The Brandy Crusta, decades earlier, had anticipated this format.

Prohibition interrupted American brandy culture, and the post-war period saw whiskey and vodka ascend. But brandy never entirely disappeared, and the cocktail revival restored many classics to prominence.

## **Understanding Brandy Styles**

### **Cognac**

The pinnacle of grape brandy, Cognac must come from designated French regions, use specific grape varieties (primarily Ugni Blanc), and follow strict production methods.

The result is typically smooth, elegant, and complex—vanilla, dried fruit, and subtle oak. For cocktails, VS or VSOP expressions work best. Older Cognacs deserve sipping rather than mixing; their subtleties disappear in cocktails. Pierre Ferrand, Rémy Martin VSOP, and H by Hine offer excellent cocktail performance.

### **Armagnac**

Armagnac uses single distillation (versus Cognac's double), creating a more robust, characterful spirit. It often shows more fruit and earth than Cognac's polished elegance. In cocktails, Armagnac can substitute for Cognac while adding rustic complexity.

## **Pisco**

Unaged Peruvian pisco offers floral, grape-forward character essential to the Pisco Sour. Chilean pisco differs slightly in production regulations. For cocktails, Peruvian pisco (particularly quebranta variety) is the standard choice.

## **Apple Brandy**

American applejack (like Laird's) ranges from 100% apple distillate to blends with neutral spirit.

French calvados ages in oak, showing more complexity. Both bring apple character to cocktails — essential for Jack Rose and Corpse Reviver #1.

# **The Brandy Shelf**

**Cognac (Essential):** Choose a VS or VSOP for mixing. Pierre Ferrand 1840 was specifically created for cocktails; Martell VS and Rémy Martin VSOP also perform well.

**Pisco (Recommended):** For Pisco Sours, you need pisco. Barsol, Campo de Encanto, and Macchu Pisco offer quality at reasonable prices.

**Apple Brandy (Recommended):** Laird's Applejack provides authentic American character. Laird's Bonded (100 proof) offers more intensity for cocktails.

**Armagnac (Optional):** For those exploring beyond Cognac. Delord, Darroze, and Château de Laubade offer quality expressions.

# Easy

## Sidecar

The definitive brandy sour—Cognac, orange liqueur, and lemon juice in perfect balance.

### **Recipe:**

1 1/2 oz Cognac

1 oz Cointreau

1/2 oz fresh lemon juice

Sugar rim (optional)

Shake with ice. Double strain into chilled coupe.

The Sidecar emerged around World War I in either London or Paris—both cities claim it. The name supposedly references an American army captain who arrived by motorcycle sidecar. The earliest recipes appeared in 1922, and the drink quickly achieved classic status. This structure—spirit, citrus liqueur, citrus juice—became a template for countless variations including the Margarita.

## Pisco Sour

Peru's national cocktail — pisco, citrus, and egg white crowned with Angostura bitters.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz pisco
- 3/8 oz fresh lemon juice
- 3/8 oz fresh lime juice
- 3/4 oz simple syrup
- 1 egg white
- Angostura bitters for garnish

Dry shake all ingredients vigorously. Add ice and shake again. Strain into rocks glass. Dot bitters on foam.

This cocktail emerged in the 1920s at Morris' Bar in Lima. American bartender Victor Vaughen Morris created an early version, but Mario Bruiget, his Peruvian colleague, added egg white and Angostura bitters, creating the modern template. Peru declared the Pisco Sour part of its Cultural Heritage in 2007.

## French Connection

Cognac and amaretto — a two-ingredient digestif named for the 1971 film.

### Recipe:

1 oz Cognac

1 oz amaretto

Stir with ice. Strain into rocks glass over fresh ice.

Whether the drink predates the movie or takes its name from it remains debated. The combination makes cultural sense: French Cognac meets Italian amaretto, a "marriage of two European spirits."

The almond liqueur softens Cognac's edges while the brandy provides structure and warmth. Sip this slowly.

# Intermediate

## Champs-Élysées

A Sidecar variation that substitutes green Chartreuse for orange liqueur, trading citrus brightness for herbal complexity.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz Cognac
- 1/2 oz green Chartreuse
- 3/4 oz fresh lemon juice
- 1/4 oz simple syrup
- 1 dash Angostura bitters

Shake with ice. Strain into chilled coupe.

Named after Paris's famous boulevard, the drink first appeared in *Drinks Long and Short* (1925) and gained prominence in Harry Craddock's 1930 *Savoy Cocktail Book*.

The combination of Cognac and Chartreuse creates layers of flavor: brandy's warmth, the liqueur's 130 botanicals, citrus's acid balance — a "double dose of French ingredients" that reflects early 20th-century sophistication.

## Japanese Cocktail

A rich, aromatic, subtly sweet preparation combining Cognac with orgeat and bitters—simple yet historically significant.

### Recipe:

- 2 1/2 oz Cognac
- 1/2 oz orgeat
- 3 dashes Angostura bitters
- Orange peel for garnish

Stir with ice. Strain into chilled coupe. Express orange peel over surface.

Jerry Thomas created this drink around 1860 to honor the first Japanese diplomatic mission to the United States. Despite its name, it contains no Japanese ingredients — the tribute lay in the gesture, not the recipe.

The cocktail appeared in Thomas's influential 1862 *Bartender's Guide* and remained in bartenders' repertoires until Prohibition, though it never achieved widespread popularity. The orgeat provides nutty sweetness that complements Cognac's dried fruit notes.

## Stinger

A society favorite — Cognac and white crème de menthe creating digestif perfection through unexpected harmony.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz Cognac
- 3/4 oz white crème de menthe

Shake with ice. Double strain into rocks glass over crushed ice, or serve up.

The Stinger originated around 1890 and quickly became a society drink—favored by the upper classes for its sophisticated simplicity. Reginald Vanderbilt, the millionaire, helped popularize it, describing it in 1923 as "a short drink with a long reach, a subtle blend of ardent nectars."

The combination sounds improbable but works beautifully: mint's cooling freshness contrasts with brandy's warmth. The Stinger appeared in *High Society* (1956) and James Bond's *Diamonds Are Forever*, maintaining popularity until the 1970s before fading with other cream-based classics.

## Brandy Crusta

One of the earliest cocktails to feature citrus juice and elaborate garnish—a precursor to both the Sidecar and the Margarita.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz Cognac
- 1/2 oz Cointreau
- 1/2 oz maraschino liqueur
- 3/4 oz fresh lemon juice
- 2 dashes Angostura bitters
- Sugar rim for garnish
- Lemon peel for garnish

Shake with ice. Double strain into sugar-rimmed coupe.

Joseph Santini created this cocktail in 1850s New Orleans, and Jerry Thomas documented it as the fourth drink in his 1862 *Bar-Tender's Guide*, cementing its historical importance. Cocktail historians consider it a template that would prove endlessly influential—spirit, orange liqueur, lemon, bitters. The name references the sugar "crust" rimming the glass; traditional preparation included a large lemon peel lining the inside—theatrical presentation for its era.

## Between the Sheets

A provocatively named Sidecar variation that splits the base between Cognac and rum—grape richness meets sugarcane brightness.

### **Recipe:**

- 1 oz Cognac
- 1 oz white rum
- 3/4 oz Cointreau
- 3/4 oz fresh lemon juice
- Lemon twist for garnish

Shake with ice. Strain into chilled coupe.

This cocktail emerged from the 1920s, with Harry MacElhone's Paris bar claiming credit. The suggestive name reflected Jazz Age sensibilities. Early American versions during Prohibition sometimes used gin and rum; the brandy version became standard as the drink crossed the Atlantic.

The combination creates interesting tension—complexity neither spirit achieves alone.

## Jack Rose

The cocktail that almost single-handedly preserved applejack in cocktail culture—an American apple brandy sour with a rosy hue.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz applejack
- 3/4 oz fresh lime juice
- 3/4 oz grenadine
- 

Shake with ice. Double strain into chilled coupe.
---

This drink gained popularity in the early 20th century, becoming a favorite of literary figures including Hemingway and Steinbeck. The name likely combines "jack" (from applejack) and "rose" (the pink color from grenadine), though other theories exist—including a connection to the gambler "Bald Jack Rose."

The first documented recipe appeared in 1889. David Embury included the Jack Rose among his "six basic drinks" in 1948's *The Fine Art of Mixing Drinks* — high praise that reflected its status before mid-century decline.

## Corpse Reviver #1

A hangover cure combining Cognac and apple brandy with sweet vermouth — essentially a fruit-forward Manhattan variant.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz Cognac
- 1/2 oz applejack (or calvados)
- 1 oz sweet vermouth
- 2 dashes Angostura bitters

Stir with ice. Strain into chilled coupe.

"Corpse Reviver" cocktails were drinks to "revive" the dead after heavy drinking. Harry Craddock documented this version in his 1930 *Savoy Cocktail Book*, noting it should be consumed "before 11 a.m., or whenever steam and energy are needed."

The #1 differs significantly from the more famous #2 (gin-based). The apple brandy lightens what could be heavy, while vermouth adds herbal complexity.

## Porto Flip

Brandy, port wine, and egg yolk creating luxurious texture and complex flavor — Victorian indulgence in a glass.

### Recipe:

- 1 oz brandy
- 3 oz ruby port
- 1 egg yolk
- Freshly grated nutmeg for garnish

Dry shake to emulsify. Add ice and shake vigorously. Double strain into chilled coupe.

The "flip" category dates to the 1600s—originally heated concoctions of beer, rum, and sugar.

By the mid-1800s, flips evolved to include eggs, creating the rich, creamy texture that defines the style. Jerry Thomas documented the Porto Flip in his 1862 guide, originally calling it the "Coffee Cocktail" (for its appearance, not ingredients).

Traditional flips use whole egg; this version uses yolk for extra richness. The nutmeg garnish is traditional and essential.

## Harvard

Essentially a Brandy Manhattan—brandy and sweet vermouth with bitters, reflecting an era when collegiate names conveyed sophistication.

### Recipe:

- 1 oz brandy
- 3/4 oz sweet vermouth
- 1 dash Angostura bitters

Stir with ice. Strain into chilled cocktail glass.

Named for the university, the Harvard debuted in 1895's *Modern American Drinks*. Original recipes often included soda water for effervescence; this spirit-forward version omits the soda, emphasizing brandy-vermouth interplay. The Harvard joins the Princeton, the Yale, and other collegiate drinks from the same period.

# Advanced

## Limoncello Sidecar

A modern Sidecar variation substituting limoncello for Cointreau — doubling down on lemon for brighter, more focused flavor.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz brandy
- 1 oz fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 oz limoncello
- 1/4 oz simple syrup
- Lemon twist for garnish

Shake with ice. Strain into chilled coupe.

Featured by The Educated Barfly with the note "so obvious I don't think it even needs a description." The variation's logic is self-evident: double down on lemon instead of adding orange.

Simple syrup compensates for limoncello's lower sweetness compared to Cointreau.

The drink tastes brighter and more focused than its parent.

## Fish House Punch

One of America's oldest documented cocktails — rum, brandy, and peach brandy creating remarkable potency masked by citrus and sweetness.

### **Recipe (approximately 8 servings):**

- 8 oz dark rum
- 4 oz brandy
- 1 oz bourbon
- 4 oz fresh lime juice
- 4 oz simple syrup
- Lime wheels for garnish

Combine all ingredients in punch bowl. Add large ice block. Stir to chill. Serve in punch cups or small glasses over ice.

Fish House Punch dates to 1732 at Philadelphia's State in Schuylkill fishing club. George Washington reportedly consumed so much that he couldn't write in his diary for three days afterward.

Jerry Thomas published the recipe in 1862, though the punch had been served for over a century by then. This version scales down for home preparation; traditional service involved massive punch bowls with large ice blocks.

## Beyond These 14: Continuing Your Brandy Journey

Brandy rewards exploration. The spirits in this chapter—Cognac, pisco, apple brandy—each open distinct avenues.

**Cognac Variations:** The Sidecar template invites modification. The White Lady uses gin instead of Cognac. The Chelsea Sidecar combines gin and triple sec. You can vary sweeteners (honey, maple), citrus (grapefruit, orange), and liqueurs endlessly while maintaining the sour structure.

**Pisco Exploration:** Beyond the Sour, pisco works in many gin applications. A Pisco Punch (pisco, pineapple, lime, simple syrup) was famous in 1890s San Francisco. Pisco Collins, Pisco Old Fashioned—the spirit's clean grape character accommodates various formats.

**Apple Brandy Applications:** American applejack and French calvados work wherever you want apple character. Try them in Old Fashioneds, in sours, in stirred drinks with vermouth.

The apple note distinguishes cocktails without dominating them.

**Historical Depth:** Brandy-based punches and fizzes fill old cocktail books. The Brandy Fix, Brandy Daisy, Brandy Smash—each offers a different perspective on the spirit. These historical preparations often feel surprisingly modern.

**Digestif Culture:** Many brandy cocktails work as after-dinner drinks. The Stinger's mint, the French Connection's almond, the Porto Flip's richness—each suits post-meal contemplation. Understanding brandy cocktails means understanding when to serve them as much as how to

make them.

The elegance that defines brandy extends to the culture surrounding it. These aren't party drinks (Fish House Punch excepted); they're drinks for conversation, for lingering, for

appreciation. The fourteen cocktails here introduce that world. Where you go next depends on how deeply you want to explore.





# **Chapter 7: Champagne & Sparkling - The Celebratory Spirit**

Champagne transforms occasions. Its effervescence signals celebration, its pop announces arrival, its bubbles lift whatever they touch. In cocktails, sparkling wine adds texture, lightness, and festivity that still spirits cannot replicate.

This chapter covers drinks that rely on champagne, prosecco, or other sparkling wines as primary components. Some are simple builds — sparkling wine elevated with a single modifier.

Others are complex constructions where champagne provides the finishing flourish. All share the quality of feeling special, of marking moments worth remembering.

The eleven drinks here range from brunch staples to late-night indulgences, from Italian aperitivo culture to American innovation. They prove that bubbles belong in cocktails as surely as in flutes.

## **The Effervescent Story: History of Sparkling Wine Cocktails**

Champagne has been mixed with other ingredients almost since its creation. The *méthode champenoise*—the secondary fermentation that creates those famous bubbles—was understood by the late 17th century. By the mid-19th century, cocktails featuring champagne appeared regularly in bartenders' guides.

### **The Golden Age**

Jerry Thomas included the Champagne Cocktail in his 1862 *Bar-Tender's Guide*—a sugar cube soaked in bitters,

topped with champagne. The format established a template: something sweet, something aromatic, topped with bubbles. The drink became synonymous with luxury, appearing in high society gatherings and eventually in Hollywood films like *Casablanca*.

The French 75 emerged from World War I—named, supposedly, for the powerful French 75mm field gun, because the drink "hits with similar force." It combined gin, lemon, and sugar with champagne, creating one of the most enduring champagne cocktails.

### **Post-War Evolution**

The Bellini arrived in 1948 at Harry's Bar in Venice, combining prosecco with white peach purée. Giuseppe Cipriani named it for the soft pink tones in Giovanni Bellini's Renaissance paintings. The drink epitomized Italian elegance and helped establish prosecco as a cocktail ingredient distinct from champagne. The Mimosa—champagne and orange juice—became a brunch institution by the 1960s. Its origins remain disputed (Frank Meier at the Ritz Paris in 1925 gets frequent credit), but its cultural position is secure. The Mimosa made champagne cocktails accessible, acceptable at breakfast, and fundamentally democratic.

### **Modern Movements**

The Aperol Spritz transformed European drinking culture in the 2010s. The drink existed since the 1950s, but Campari's marketing campaigns after acquiring Aperol in 2003 made it a global phenomenon. The "3-2-1" ratio became instantly recognizable; the orange drink in wine glasses became visual shorthand for European vacation.

Social media accelerated innovation. The Frozen Aperol Spritz went viral on TikTok in 2024, adapting a sophisticated aperitivo into a slushy summer drink. The Sbagliato — a "mistaken" Negroni with prosecco instead of gin — became famous after a viral celebrity interview.

Champagne cocktails proved surprisingly adaptable to digital culture.

# Understanding Sparkling Wines

## Champagne

True Champagne comes only from the Champagne region of France, produced using *méthode champenoise* (secondary fermentation in bottle). Its high acidity and fine bubbles make it ideal for cocktails—it cuts through sweetness and provides lift without overwhelming other ingredients.

For mixing, non-vintage brut works best. Save vintage and prestige cuvées for drinking straight; their subtleties disappear in cocktails.

## Prosecco

Italian prosecco uses the Charmat method (secondary fermentation in tank), creating softer bubbles and a gentler, fruitier profile than champagne. It's generally sweeter, less acidic, and less expensive—making it the default choice for many sparkling cocktails.

Prosecco suits the Bellini, Aperol Spritz, and similar Italian-inspired drinks. Its softer character integrates differently than champagne's assertive bubbles.

## Cava and Others

Spanish cava uses *méthode champenoise* but typically at lower price points than champagne.

Crémant (French sparkling wine from regions outside Champagne) offers similar value. For cocktails where champagne character matters but budget doesn't stretch to actual Champagne, these alternatives perform well.

## The Bubbles Shelf

**Prosecco (Essential):** The workhorse of sparkling cocktails. Choose brut or extra-dry (confusingly, extra-dry is slightly sweeter than brut). Avoid the sweetest styles for cocktails.

**Non-Vintage Brut Champagne (Recommended):** When the recipe specifically calls for champagne, or when you want that particular acidity and minerality. Moët & Chandon Impérial, Veuve Clicquot, or Taittinger Brut provide reliable quality.

**Crémant or Cava (Budget Alternative):** For high-volume situations or casual occasions. These provide bubbles and festivity at lower cost.

# Easy

## Aperol Spritz

The embodiment of Italian aperitivo culture—low-alcohol, pre-dinner drinking meant to stimulate appetite and conversation.

### Recipe:

- 3 oz prosecco
- 2 oz Aperol
- 1 oz soda water
- Orange slice for garnish

Build in wine glass over ice. Add prosecco first, then Aperol, then soda. Stir gently.

The drink dates to the 1950s in Venice and the Veneto region, though the "spritz" concept originated with Austrian soldiers diluting Italian wines during the Habsburg occupation. Aperol itself was created in 1919 by the Barbieri brothers in Padua — a bitter orange aperitif with rhubarb and gentian.

The drink remained regional until Campari's 2003 acquisition launched global marketing campaigns built around the "3-2-1" ratio. The Aperol Spritz became the drink of European summers, representing *la dolce vita* in a single sip.

## Bellini

Prosecco and white peach purée creating a drink whose soft pink-orange color evokes Renaissance painting.

### Recipe:

- 3 oz prosecco
- 2 oz white peach purée

Add peach purée to chilled champagne flute. Slowly top with prosecco, stirring gently to integrate.

Giuseppe Cipriani created the Bellini at Harry's Bar in Venice in 1948—though some sources suggest 1934-1947. The color reminded Cipriani of tones in Giovanni Bellini's Renaissance paintings.

The Bellini was seasonal initially, available only when white peaches were ripe. Its popularity eventually demanded year-round availability, leading to various purée and juice substitutes. Purists insist on fresh white peaches; pragmatists accept quality frozen purée.

Harry's Bar became a legend partly through this drink, drawing celebrities and aristocrats who spread its reputation worldwide.

## Kir Royale

Champagne elevated with crème de cassis—a wartime improvisation transformed into sophisticated celebration.

### **Recipe:**

- 1 barspoon crème de cassis
- Champagne to top

Add cassis to champagne flute. Top slowly with champagne.

Canon Félix Kir, a Catholic priest and mayor of Dijon during World War II, created the original Kir to boost morale when Nazis confiscated red wine. His combination of white Burgundy wine with crème de cassis (blackcurrant liqueur) mimicked red wine's appearance. After the war, French bartenders elevated the drink by substituting champagne for white wine, creating the Kir Royale. The drink remains a symbol of French resilience and hospitality.

## Mimosa

America's brunch cocktail—champagne and fresh orange juice that made sparkling wine acceptable at breakfast.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz fresh orange juice
- Champagne to top

Pour orange juice into champagne flute. Top carefully with champagne.

The Mimosa's origin involves competing claims—Frank Meier at Paris's Ritz Hotel around 1925, or evolution from London's Buck's Fizz (1921). The difference between Mimosa and Buck's Fizz lies in proportions: Buck's Fizz uses twice as much champagne as juice; the Mimosa approaches equal parts.

Whatever its origin, the Mimosa became America's brunch cocktail by the 1960s. It democratized sparkling wine and established a tradition that persists today. Fresh squeezed orange juice makes a significant difference here.

# Intermediate

## Champagne Cocktail

Celebration in its purest form—a sugar cube soaked in bitters, topped with champagne, releasing streams of bubbles.

### **Recipe:**

- 1 sugar cube
- 6-8 dashes Angostura bitters
- Champagne to top
- Lemon twist for garnish

Place sugar cube in champagne flute. Saturate with bitters. Top slowly with champagne. Express lemon twist over surface and drop in.

Jerry Thomas published this recipe in 1862, making it one of the oldest champagne cocktails on record. The simplicity belies its impact—as the sugar dissolves, it gradually sweetens the drink.

The Champagne Cocktail appeared in *Casablanca* and *An Affair to Remember*, cementing its glamorous image. Brandy appeared in later versions, though the original contained none.

## Death in the Afternoon

Hemingway's creation—absinthe and champagne in surprisingly harmonious combination, anise notes lifted by bubbles.

### **Recipe:**

- 1 oz absinthe
- Champagne to top

Pour absinthe into champagne flute. Slowly top with chilled champagne until the drink turns milky opalescent.

Ernest Hemingway created this drink and contributed the recipe to a 1935 celebrity cocktail book. His instructions: "Pour one jigger absinthe into a Champagne glass. Add iced Champagne until it attains the proper opalescent milkiness. Drink three to five of these slowly."

The name references Hemingway's 1932 book about bullfighting. The drink reflects his personality—bold, simple, potentially dangerous. His recommendation to drink "three to five" should be approached with caution.

## Seelbach

Bourbon, Cointreau, extensive bitters, and champagne creating remarkable complexity — Kentucky meets France.

### Recipe:

- 1 oz bourbon
- 1/2 oz Cointreau
- 7 dashes Angostura bitters
- 7 dashes Peychaud's bitters
- Champagne to top
- Orange twist for garnish

Build bourbon, Cointreau, and bitters in champagne flute. Top with champagne.

The Seelbach originated at Louisville's Seelbach Hotel, allegedly in the 1920s — though its discovery and popularization came much later when bartender Adam Seger "found" the recipe in hotel archives in the 1990s. Questions about its authenticity persist, but the drink's quality is undeniable.

The seven dashes each of Angostura and Peychaud's sound excessive but prove essential — they balance bourbon's sweetness against champagne's acidity.

## Prince of Wales

Gilded Age indulgence—champagne, cognac, Bénédictine, and bitters suited to aristocratic social scenes.

### Recipe:

- 1 sugar cube
- 2 dashes Angostura bitters
- 3/4 oz cognac
- 1/4 oz Bénédictine
- Champagne to top
- Orange wedge for garnish
- Cherry for garnish

Place sugar cube in highball glass. Saturate with bitters. Add ice cube. Pour in cognac. Top with champagne. Float Bénédictine on top.

Albert Edward, Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII), reportedly created this cocktail himself at private events in the late 19th century. The earliest recipe appeared in an anonymous 1901 biography. The original recipe included various elements (pineapple, maraschino); this version focuses on the core combination. It's rich and complex.

## Ritz

Cognac, orange liqueur, citrus, and champagne—a celebration cocktail with substance and style.

### Recipe:

- 3/4 oz cognac
- 1/4 oz Cointreau
- 3/4 oz fresh orange juice
- Champagne to top

Shake cognac, Cointreau, and orange juice with ice. Strain into champagne flute. Top with champagne.

Dale DeGroff created this cocktail in 1985 at New York's Aurora, later featuring it at the Rainbow Room. His inspiration came from cocktails associated with the London and Paris Ritz hotels — he designed a "Ritz Cocktail for New York." The combination creates something greater than its parts.

# Modern

## Frozen Aperol Spritz

The sophisticated Italian aperitivo transformed into a slushy phenomenon—amplified refreshment with vibrant orange appeal.

### Recipe:

- 4 oz Aperol
- 4 oz fresh orange juice
- 4 oz prosecco
- 2 cups ice
- Orange wheel for garnish

Blend all ingredients until smooth and slushy. Pour into wine glass.

The Frozen Aperol Spritz went viral on TikTok in summer 2024. The viral version uses equal parts rather than the classic 3-2-1 ratio — simpler to remember, easier to make at home.

The bright orange color becomes even more vibrant when blended. The trend reflects how classic cocktails adapt to social media age: frozen formats, visual appeal, low-ABV options for extended drinking, and recipes simple enough for home preparation.

## Sbagliato

A "mistaken" Negroni—prosecco instead of gin creating lighter, effervescent bitter-sweet character.

### Recipe:

- 1 oz Campari
- 1 oz sweet vermouth
- Prosecco to top

Orange slice for garnishBuild Campari and vermouth in rocks glass over ice. Top with prosecco. Stir gently.

"Sbagliato" means "mistaken" in Italian — legend holds that a bartender accidentally grabbed prosecco instead of gin while making a Negroni. The "mistake" proved delicious. The drink existed quietly for decades before going viral in 2022 when actress Emma D'Arcy mentioned it in an interview. Suddenly "Negroni Sbagliato... with prosecco in it" became a global meme and genuine cocktail trend. The Sbagliato offers Negroni's bitter-sweet character without the same alcohol intensity — an aperitivo that extends rather than ends conversations.

## Beyond These 11: Continuing Your Sparkling Journey

Champagne cocktails reward exploration beyond these classics.

**The French 75 Family:** The French 75 (gin, lemon, sugar, champagne) appears in the Gin chapter, but variations abound. The French 76 substitutes vodka. The French 77 uses elderflower liqueur. The template — spirit, citrus, sweet, bubbles — accommodates endless modification.

**Bellini Variations:** Swap peach purée for other fruits — raspberry (Rossini), strawberry (Rossini variation), pear. The format works with any fruit that purées smoothly.

**Spritz Exploration:** Beyond Aperol, try Campari Spritz (more bitter), Select Spritz (Venetian tradition), Cynar Spritz (artichoke liqueur). The spritz format accommodates various Italian aperitivi.

**Champagne as Topper:** Many cocktails benefit from a champagne float. Add bubbles to punch, to sours, to spirit-forward drinks that need lift. The technique extends beyond traditional champagne cocktails.

**Serving Considerations:** Champagne cocktails require attention to temperature. Keep all components cold. Chill glasses. Don't let drinks sit—effervescence fades quickly. Serve immediately after preparation.

The bubbles that define this chapter do more than provide texture — they transform mood. A still drink is pleasant; a sparkling drink is celebratory. These eleven cocktails provide vocabulary for celebration. When you deploy them determines what you're celebrating.





# **Chapter 8: Mixed Base & Tiki - The Complex Builds**

This chapter contains cocktails that defy simple categorization — drinks built from multiple spirits, elaborate tiki creations, and party punches designed for effect. They share a common thread: complexity achieved through combination.

Tiki drinks represent one of cocktail history's most creative movements. The founding fathers — Donn Beach and Trader Vic — developed recipes of remarkable sophistication, blending multiple rums with exotic syrups and fresh juices to create drinks that transported customers to imaginary tropical paradises. Their secrets, jealously guarded for decades, were only recently decoded by historians like Jeff "Beachbum" Berry.

The sixteen drinks here range from tiki classics to party drinks to modern reconstructions. They reward both the adventurous host and the curious home bartender.

## **Island Escapism: The Tiki Story**

Tiki emerged from Depression-era America — a fantasy of tropical escape when real travel was impossible. Donn Beach (born Ernest Raymond Beaumont Gantt) opened Don the Beachcomber in Hollywood in 1933, creating an immersive environment of Polynesian décor and elaborate cocktails.

Victor Bergeron, visiting in 1937, was inspired to transform his Oakland bar into Trader Vic's.

Both men developed complex, proprietary recipes using coded ingredients and numbered bottles to prevent theft. Their competition drove innovation: the Zombie, the Mai Tai, the Fog Cutter, and dozens more. Tiki became a cultural phenomenon after World War II, when veterans returned from Pacific theaters with genuine nostalgia for

island life.

The movement declined in the 1970s but experienced revival in the 1990s and 2000s. Jeff Berry's tireless research decoded the original recipes; modern bars like Smuggler's Cove, Three Dots and a Dash, and Lost Lake elevated tiki to craft cocktail standards.

# Tiki Classics

## Zombie

The most legendary tiki drink and one of the most potent – Donn Beach's establishments famously limited customers to two per visit.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz Jamaican rum
- 1 1/2 oz gold rum
- 1 oz overproof rum
- 1/2 oz falernum
- 1 oz white grapefruit juice
- 3/4 oz fresh lime juice
- 1/2 oz cinnamon syrup
- 1/4 oz grenadine
- 1 barspoon absinthe
- 2 dashes Angostura bitters
- Mint sprig for garnish

Whip shake all ingredients with crushed ice. Dump into tiki mug. Top with more crushed ice.

Donn Beach created the Zombie in 1934. The recipe remained secret until Jeff Berry decoded it decades later. The name came from a customer who, after consuming the drink, reported feeling "like a zombie" at his subsequent business meeting. Multiple rums combine with falernum, citrus, cinnamon syrup, and a touch of absinthe to create surprising complexity beneath the strength.

# Hurricane

Synonymous with New Orleans excess—sweet, strong, and served by the gallon during Mardi Gras.

## **Recipe:**

- 1 oz Jamaican rum (Smith & Cross)
- 1 oz dark rum
- 1 oz passion fruit syrup
- 1 oz fresh lemon juice
- Orange slice for garnish
- Cherry for garnish

Whip shake with crushed ice. Dump into hurricane glass.
---

Pat O'Brien's bar in New Orleans created the Hurricane in the 1940s to use surplus rum during wartime whiskey shortages. The drink took its name from the lamp-shaped glass designed for serving it. Quality varies wildly; proper versions use fresh passion fruit and lemon rather than artificial mixes.

## Jungle Bird

Italian bitter meeting tropical fruit — Campari distinguishes this from American tiki tradition.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz dark Jamaican rum
- 3/4 oz Campari
- 2 oz pineapple juice
- 1/2 oz fresh lime juice
- 1/2 oz simple syrup
- Pineapple wedge for garnish

Shake with ice. Strain into tiki mug over fresh ice.

Created in 1973 at the Hilton Kuala Lumpur, the cocktail was named for the colorful birds visible from the hotel bar. Jeff Berry revived the recipe in his 2002 *Intoxica!*, and it became a modern classic. Giuseppe González's refinement at New York's Painkiller bar (using blackstrap rum and reduced pineapple juice) intensified the bitter notes. The Jungle Bird achieved IBA official status in 2024.

## Painkiller

Tropical escape without tiki complexity—rum, pineapple, coconut, and orange juice finished with nutmeg.

### Recipe:

2 1/2 oz navy strength rum

4 oz pineapple juice

1 oz cream of coconut

1 oz orange juice

Freshly grated nutmeg for garnish

Pineapple wedge for garnish

Whip shake and dump into tiki mug over crushed ice.

Daphne Henderson created this drink at the Soggy Dollar Bar on Jost Van Dyke in the British Virgin Islands — a bar named because patrons swim ashore with cash. Charles Tobias of Pusser's Rum eventually trademarked the recipe. The 4:1:1 ratio (pineapple to coconut to orange) creates reliable balance.

## 3 Dots and a Dash

Donn Beach's World War II victory toast—the name represents Morse code for "V" (victory): ···—.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz Martinique rum
- 1/2 oz Demerara rum
- 1/4 oz pimento dram (allspice)
- 1/4 oz velvet falernum
- 1/2 oz fresh lime juice
- 1/2 oz honey syrup
- 1/2 oz orange juice
- 2 dashes Angostura bitters
- Three cherries for garnish
- Pineapple spear for garnish

Whip shake or blend with crushed ice. Serve slushy in tiki mug.

Donn Beach created this during World War II. The garnish traditionally includes three cherries (dots) and a pineapple spear (dash). The recipe combines two styles of rum with allspice dram, falernum, honey, and citrus. Jeff Berry recovered it in his research and published it in *Sippin' Safari*.

## Fog Cutter

Trader Vic's potent punch—"After two of these, you won't even see the stuff."

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz white rum 1 oz cognac VSOP
- 1/2 oz gin
- 1/2 oz orgeat
- 1/2 oz fresh lemon juice
- 3/4 oz fresh orange juice
- 1/2 oz amontillado sherry (float)
- Mint sprig for garnish

Shake all except sherry. Strain into tiki mug over ice. Float sherry on top.

Trader Vic created this drink, combining rum, brandy, gin, and sherry—earning comparisons to "the Long Island Iced Tea of exotic drinks."

The name references old American slang for strong morning drinks. Original service included custom ceramic mugs that helped establish tiki's distinctive glassware culture.

## Scorpion

Rum, cognac, orgeat, and citrus — originally developed as a communal bowl drink.

### Recipe:

- 1 oz light rum
- 1 oz cognac
- 1 oz orange juice
- 1/2 oz lemon juice
- 1/2 oz simple syrup
- 1/4 oz orgeat
- Mint sprig for garnish

Whip shake or blend with crushed ice. Dump into tiki mug.
---

Trader Vic discovered a proto-Scorpion in Honolulu, where it was made with Okolehao (Hawaiian moonshine). He brought the concept to Oakland, substituting rum and cognac, and developed it into a communal bowl drink. The single-serve version here captures the essential combination.

## Ancient Mariner

One of tiki's most balanced modern classics — allspice dram and grapefruit creating distinctive depth.

### Recipe:

- 1 oz Jamaican rum
- 1 oz Demerara rum
- 1/4 oz allspice dram
- 3/4 oz fresh lime juice
- 1/2 oz simple syrup
- 1/2 oz grapefruit juice
- Mint sprig for garnish
- Lime wheel for garnish

Whip shake and dump into tiki mug over crushed ice.

Jeff Berry created this in 1994 while attempting to recreate Trader Vic's Navy Grog by taste.

The process took so long that, as Berry put it, "that's how old we felt" by the end—hence the name referencing Coleridge's poem.

## Pineapple Trainwreck

Despite the chaotic name, carefully balanced — aged rum and overproof combined with pineapple, ginger, and dual bitters.

### Recipe:

- 1 oz aged rum
- 1/2 oz overproof rum
- 1.5 oz pineapple juice
- 1/2 oz lemon juice
- 3/4 oz ginger syrup
- 1 dash Angostura bitters
- 1 dash Peychaud's bitters
- Pineapple wedge for garnish

Shake with ice. Strain into coupe or tiki mug.

Ryan Magarian created this modern tiki punch at Portland's Oven and Shaker. Quality ginger syrup is essential. The creator specifically recommends Plantation Original Dark and OFTD rums.

# Party Drinks

## Long Island Iced Tea

Five spirits with citrus and cola creating a deceptively drinkable drink — the "more is more" philosophy.

### Recipe:

- 1/2 oz gin
- 1/2 oz white rum
- 1/2 oz vodka
- 1/2 oz tequila
- 1/2 oz Cointreau
- 3/4 oz fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 oz simple syrup
- Cola to top
- Lemon slice for garnish

Shake spirits, lemon, and syrup. Strain into highball over ice. Top with cola.

Disputed origins trace to either Prohibition-era Tennessee (where it disguised alcohol as iced tea) or 1970s Long Island, New York. Despite containing vodka, gin, rum, tequila, and triple sec, proper balance prevents any single spirit from dominating.

## Adios Motherfucker

The Long Island's blue cousin—blue curaçao and Sprite creating vivid color and sweeter flavor.

### Recipe:

- 1/2 oz gin
- 1/2 oz white rum
- 1/2 oz vodka
- 1/2 oz tequila 1/2 oz blue curaçao
- 3/4 oz fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 oz simple syrup
- Sprite to top
- Lemon slice for garnish

Shake spirits, lemon, and syrup. Strain into highball over ice. Top with Sprite.

This emerged from 1980s American bar culture — probably TGI Fridays, possibly Southern California. Known by various euphemisms (AMF, Blue Motorcycle), the drink exemplifies shock-value naming from pre-craft cocktail culture. Yet it remains popular because, properly made, it works.

## Tokyo Tea

Another Long Island variation using Midori (Japanese melon liqueur)—the name references its Japanese origin.

### Recipe:

- 1/2 oz gin
- 1/2 oz white rum
- 1/2 oz vodka
- 1/2 oz tequila
- 1/2 oz Midori
- 3/4 oz fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 oz simple syrup
- Sprite to top
- Lemon slice for garnish

Shake spirits, lemon, and syrup. Strain into highball over ice. Top with Sprite.

Likely created at TGI Fridays in the 1980s-90s, the Tokyo Tea experienced recent resurgence alongside broader melon liqueur revival.

## Suffering Bastard

A World War II hangover cure — gin, brandy, lime, bitters, and ginger beer proving restorative.

### Recipe:

- 1 oz brandy
- 1 oz gin
- 1 oz fresh lime juice
- 1 dash Angostura bitters
- Ginger beer to top
- Orange peel for garnish
- Mint sprig for garnish

Shake spirits, lime, and bitters. Strain into highball over ice. Top with ginger beer.

Joe Scialom created this in 1942 at Cairo's Shepherd's Hotel for British soldiers. The drink later spawned variations: Dying Bastard (add bourbon), Dead Bastard (add rum). Trader Vic developed a separate rum-based version that entered tiki canon.

## Caribou Lou

Modern folk recipe spread through music—151 rum, Malibu, and pineapple juice immortalized by Tech N9ne.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz 151 rum
- 1 oz Malibu coconut rum
- 5 oz pineapple juice
- Pineapple wedge for garnish

Build in highball glass over ice. Stir to combine.

Rapper Tech N9ne immortalized this combination in his 2006 song, making it a phenomenon.

The song specifies "151 and Malibu rum, Caribou get them all numb." The recipe couldn't be simpler.

# Modern Complex

## Last Flight

A hybrid of the Last Word and Paper Plane — equal parts creating more herbal intensity with perfect balance.

### Recipe:

- 3/4 oz bourbon
- 3/4 oz green Chartreuse
- 3/4 oz Aperol
- 3/4 oz fresh lemon juice
- Lemon twist for garnish

Shake with ice. Strain into chilled coupe.

Italian bartender Giulio Cercato created this hybrid of the Last Word and Paper Plane.

Substituting green Chartreuse for Amaro Nonino creates more herbal intensity than the Paper Plane while maintaining perfect balance.

## Turquoise Hulk

A craft reconstruction of the Incredible Hulk—proper ingredients replacing the artificial blue liqueur.

### Recipe:

- 1 oz cognac
- 1 oz vodka
- 1/2 oz blue curaçao
- 1 oz pineapple juice
- 1/2 oz fresh lime juice
- 1 tsp simple syrup

Shake with ice. Strain into chilled coupe.

The Educated Barfly created this reconstruction of the Incredible Hulk—a 1990s-2000s club drink combining Hennessy with Hypnotiq. His version replaces Hypnotiq with proper ingredients: cognac, vodka, blue curaçao, and fresh pineapple.

The drink represents craft cocktail culture's growing comfort with its recent past — reconstructing club drinks with the same care given to Prohibition classics.

## Beyond These 16: Continuing Your Complex Journey

The drinks here demonstrate what's possible when you combine multiple spirits thoughtfully.

The tiki classics reward study—understanding why Donn Beach used three rums instead of one, why falernum and allspice dram appear so frequently, how citrus and sweetness balance high-proof spirits.

**Building Tiki Knowledge:** Start with simpler drinks (Painkiller, Jungle Bird) before attempting Zombies and Navy Grog. Acquire essential modifiers: falernum, orgeat, allspice dram. Study Jeff Berry's books for historical context and accurate recipes.

**Party Drink Redemption:** The Long Island family works when properly balanced. Fresh citrus and quality spirits transform these from regrettable to respectable.

**Template Understanding:** The equal-parts builds (Last Word, Paper Plane, Naked and Famous, Last Flight) demonstrate how substitution creates new drinks while maintaining balance.

These sixteen cocktails prove that more ingredients can mean more satisfaction—when handled with care.



# **Chapter 9: Low-ABV & Aperitifs - The Art of Restraint**

Not every occasion calls for strength. Sometimes you want conversation to last, afternoons to stretch, evenings to unfold slowly. Low-ABV cocktails — built on fortified wines, bitters, and liqueurs — provide sophisticated drinking without the intensity of spirit-forward drinks.

The aperitif tradition, strongest in Italy and France, centers on this philosophy. Pre-dinner drinks should stimulate appetite, not impair it. They should invite second rounds without consequences. The twelve drinks here embody this wisdom.

## **The Aperitivo Tradition**

Italy's aperitivo culture represents civilized drinking at its finest. Starting around 6 PM, Italians gather at cafés for low-alcohol drinks accompanied by small bites. The practice builds community, marks the transition from work to evening, and prepares the palate for dinner.

Vermouth — aromatized, fortified wine — sits at the heart of this tradition. Italian vermouths (both sweet/red and dry) combined with bitter liqueurs (Campari, Aperol) and various modifiers create infinite possibilities without excessive alcohol.

The spritz format—bitter liqueur, sparkling wine, soda—has conquered the world. But older traditions (the Americano, the various vermouth cocktails) offer equal elegance with more history.

# Classics

## Americano

The Negroni's ancestor—gentle bitterness and modest strength making it ideal for extended drinking.

### Recipe:

- 1 oz Campari
- 1 oz sweet vermouth
- Soda water to top
- Orange slice for garnish

Build in highball glass over ice. Top with soda.

TheAmericano emerged in 1860s Milan when Gaspare Campari combined his eponymous bitter with sweet vermouth and soda. Originally called the "Milano-Torino" (Campari from Milan, vermouth from Turin), it became "Americano" due to popularity among American tourists. TheAmericano was James Bond's first drink in Ian Fleming's novels (Casino Royale, 1953).

## Bamboo

Sherry and vermouth creating surprising depth—nutty, dry, aromatic, predating the Martini.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz dry vermouth
- 1 1/2 oz fino sherry
- 2 dashes Angostura bitters
- 1 dash orange bitters
- Orange peel for garnish

Stir with ice. Strain into chilled coupe. Express orange peel.

This cocktail dates to 1886, with bartender Louis Eppinger credited through his work in Yokohama. The Bamboo demonstrates that elegant cocktails need not include base spirits. Orange bitters add complexity.

## Chrysanthemum

Dry vermouth, Bénédictine, and absinthe creating an aperitif of remarkable sophistication.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz dry vermouth
- 1 oz Bénédictine
- 3 dashes absinthe
- Orange twist for garnish

Stir with ice. Strain into chilled coupe. Express orange twist.

Hugo Ensslin's 1916 Recipes for Mixed Drinks introduced this vermouth-forward cocktail. The drink's revival followed absinthe's 2007 re-legalization in the United States. Modern bartenders appreciate its herbal complexity.

## Adonis

A sweeter counterpart to the Bamboo—sherry and sweet vermouth with orange bitters.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz fino sherry
- 1 1/2 oz sweet vermouth
- 2 dashes orange bitters
- Orange peel for garnish

Stir with ice. Strain into chilled coupe. Express orange peel.
--

Named for the 1884 Broadway musical, the Adonis predates the cocktail revival by over a century.

## Sherry Cobbler

One of the 19th century's most popular drinks – wine, sugar, fruit representing cocktail construction at its simplest.

### Recipe:

- 3 oz amontillado sherry
- 1/2 oz simple syrup
- 3 orange slices
- Seasonal fruit for garnish
- Mint sprig for garnish

Muddle orange with syrup. Add sherry and crushed ice. Swizzle to frost glass.

The Sherry Cobbler helped establish cocktail culture in America. Served over crushed ice with fresh fruit, it predates the cocktail shaker and was originally sipped through newfangled drinking straws.

## Vermouth Cocktail

Before vermouth became merely a modifier, it anchored its own drinks—sophisticated drinking in the late 1800s.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz sweet vermouth (or dry, or half-and-half)
- 2 dashes Angostura bitters
- 1 barspoon simple syrup (optional)
- Cherry or lemon twist for garnish

Stir with ice. Strain into chilled coupe.

This simple preparation—vermouth with bitters and perhaps sugar — represented sophisticated drinking in the late 1800s.

# Modern

## White Noise

Cocchi Americano meets elderflower liqueur and soda—a refreshing low-alcohol crowd-pleaser.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz Cocchi Americano
- 1 oz elderflower liqueur
- 2 oz soda water
- Grapefruit twist for garnish

Build in highball glass over ice. Stir gently. Express grapefruit peel over surface.

Portland Hunt + Alpine Club created this refreshing aperitif. The grapefruit twist is essential — oils expressed over the drink's effervescence carry aromatic impact.

## Hugo

Tyrolean spritz variation—elderflower, prosecco, and mint for summer refreshment.

### Recipe:

- 1 oz elderflower syrup
- Fresh mint leaves
- 4 oz prosecco
- 2 oz soda water
- Mint sprig for garnish
- Lime slice for garnish

Build in wine glass with ice. Add elderflower syrup, mint, prosecco, and soda. Stir gently.

Created in 2005 at a bar in South Tyrol, the Hugo spread throughout Europe as an alternative to heavier aperitivi.

## **Limoncello Spritz**

Italian lemon liqueur with prosecco and soda—sweeter than Aperol Spritz, appealing to those who find bitter aperitivi challenging.

### **Recipe:**

- 2 oz limoncello
- 3 oz prosecco
- 1 oz soda water
- Lemon slice for garnish
- Rosemary sprig for garnish

Build in wine glass over ice. Stir gently.
--

The logical combination of Italian lemon liqueur with prosecco and soda.

## Garibaldi

Campari and "fluffy" orange juice—high-speed blending creates something greater than the sum of parts.

### **Recipe:**

- 1 1/2 oz Campari
- 4 oz fresh orange juice (fluffy)
- Orange slice for garnish

Blend orange juice until frothy. Build in highball over ice.
--

Named for Giuseppe Garibaldi, who united Italy, this simple combination requires one secret: aerated OJ, achieved through high-speed blending that incorporates air.

## Campari Spritz

The original bitter spritz—more complex and challenging than its orange Aperol cousin.

### Recipe:

- 4 oz prosecco
- 2 oz Campari
- 1 oz soda water
- Orange slice for garnish

Build in wine glass over ice. Add prosecco, then Campari, then soda.

Campari's intensity makes this the sophisticated choice, predating Aperol's softer version.

## 2-2

Aperol and a full ounce of absinthe—converting Aperol skeptics through herbal intensity.

### **Recipe:**

- 1 1/2 oz Aperol
- 1 oz absinthe
- 1 oz fresh lemon juice
- 1/4 oz simple syrup
- 6 dashes orange bitters
- Flamed orange peel for garnish

Shake with ice. Strain into chilled coupe. Flame orange peel over surface and discard.

This modern creation from @she\_thebartender boldly combines Aperol with absinthe. Six dashes of orange bitters and a flamed orange peel tie everything together.

## Beyond These 12: The Low-ABV Landscape

Low-ABV drinking continues growing as consumers seek sophistication without impairment.

The drinks here provide starting points; endless variations await.

**Sherry Exploration:** The Bamboo and Adonis demonstrate sherry's cocktail potential.

Experiment with different styles: fino for dry applications, amontillado for depth, oloroso for richness, Pedro Ximénez for sweetness.

**Vermouth as Star:** Quality vermouth deserves center stage. Explore producers like Cocchi, Carpano, Punt e Mes, and Dolin in vermouth-forward drinks.

**Spritz Creativity:** Beyond Aperol lies endless possibility. Try Select, Cynar, Montenegro, or other amari in the spritz format.

**Session Cocktails:** For extended drinking, any spirit-based drink can be diluted with more mixer, lengthened with soda, or split with vermouth to reduce intensity.

The art lies in balance. These twelve drinks prove that restraint can be as rewarding as strength.





# **Chapter 10: Coffee & Dessert - The Sweet Finish**

Every meal deserves a proper ending. This chapter gathers twelve cocktails that serve as liquid desserts, caffeinated nightcaps, and indulgent conclusions to any occasion. These drinks blur the line between cocktail and confection, offering sweetness without sacrificing sophistication.

Coffee cocktails anchor this collection. The Espresso Martini has conquered the world; its ancestor the Irish Coffee remains a touchstone of warm hospitality. Cream-based classics like the Brandy Alexander and Grasshopper recall an era when dessert drinks were the height of elegance. Modern creations like the Parmesan Espresso Martini push boundaries while honoring the templates that preceded them.

These twelve drinks share a purpose: they end things beautifully. Whether you're closing a dinner party or extending a night that refuses to end, they provide the punctuation every occasion deserves.

## **The Coffee Cocktail Renaissance**

Coffee and alcohol have intertwined for centuries. Irish Coffee emerged from 1940s necessity; the Black and White Russians from Cold War-era creativity.

But the modern coffee cocktail renaissance began in 1983 London, when Dick Bradsell combined vodka with fresh espresso and changed everything.

### **The Bradsell Revolution**

Dick Bradsell created the drink that would become the Espresso Martini at Soho Brasserie, responding to a model's request for something to "wake me up and f\* \*\* me

up." The confluence of a coffee machine near his bar station and his creative instincts produced a drink that would take decades to find its audience.

Originally called the Vodka Espresso, then briefly the Pharmaceutical Stimulant, the drink became "Espresso Martini" during the 1990s trend of naming anything in a V-shaped glass a "martini." The name stuck, despite containing neither gin nor vermouth.

The Espresso Martini's rise to global dominance came slowly, then suddenly. By the 2010s, it topped cocktail popularity charts worldwide. Its appeal is clear: caffeine and alcohol together, sophisticated presentation, that signature foam cap with three coffee beans representing health, wealth, and happiness.

## **The Second Wave**

The Espresso Martini's success opened doors for coffee cocktails broadly. The Carajillo experienced explosive growth in 2024, with searches increasing 118% year-over-year.

Variations multiplied—the Parmesan Espresso Martini went viral on TikTok, accumulating over 328 million views. The Affogato Martini brought Italian dessert traditions into cocktail form.

This wasn't just trend-following. Quality espresso became accessible as coffee culture matured.

Home espresso machines, specialty coffee shops, and cold brew ubiquity meant fresh coffee was available everywhere. The infrastructure for coffee cocktails finally existed.

## **Beyond Espresso**

Coffee liqueurs deserve attention too. Kahlúa dominated for decades, but craft alternatives emerged: Mr. Black from Australia, Borghetti from Italy, and dozens of small-batch producers.

These liqueurs offer complexity beyond sweetness, making classics like the Black Russian and White Russian worth revisiting.

# The Coffee and Dessert Shelf

**Vodka (Essential):** The neutral spirit that lets coffee shine. Any quality unflavored vodka works; save premium bottles for sipping neat.

**Coffee Liqueur (Essential):** Kahlúa remains the standard, but Mr. Black offers more coffee intensity with less sweetness. Keep both if budget allows.

**Licor 43 (Essential):** The Spanish vanilla liqueur essential for Carajillos. Nothing substitutes adequately.

**Amaretto (Essential):** Disaronno or similar almond-flavored liqueur for the Amaretto Sour and countless other applications.

**Irish Whiskey (Essential):** Jameson works perfectly; higher-end options add nuance to Irish Coffee.

**Brandy/Cognac (Recommended):** For the Brandy Alexander. VS Cognac or quality brandy sufficient for mixing.

**Crème de Cacao (Recommended):** Both white and dark versions appear in dessert drinks. The white keeps colors clean; dark adds depth.

**Crème de Menthe (Recommended):** Green for Grasshoppers, white for subtler applications. Quality matters — cheap versions taste artificial.

**Fresh Espresso (Essential):** No substitutes. Instant coffee fails. Cold brew works in some applications.

# Coffee Classics

## Espresso Martini

Caffeine and alcohol together in sophisticated presentation—that signature foam cap with three coffee beans representing health, wealth, and happiness.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz vodka
- 3/4 oz coffee liqueur
- 1/4 oz simple syrup
- 1 oz fresh espresso
- Three espresso beans for garnish

Shake all ingredients vigorously with ice until well-chilled and frothy. Strain into chilled coupe.

Dick Bradsell created this drink around 1983 at London's Soho Brasserie. The legend involves a model—rumored to be Kate Moss—requesting something to "wake me up and f\* \* \* me up."

With a coffee machine conveniently near his bar station, Bradsell combined fresh espresso with vodka, coffee liqueur, and sugar syrup. The drink's name evolved from "Vodka Espresso" through "Pharmaceutical Stimulant" before landing on "Espresso Martini" during the 1990s V-shaped glass naming trend.

## Irish Coffee

A touchstone of warm hospitality—Irish whiskey, hot coffee, and floated cream created during wartime necessity.

### **Recipe:**

- 1 oz Irish whiskey
- 1/4 oz cinnamon syrup
- Hot coffee to fill
- Cold heavy cream (floated)

Build whiskey and syrup in warmed glass. Add hot coffee. Float cold cream by pouring over the back of a spoon.

Joe Sheridan, a chef at Foynes Airbase in County Limerick, created Irish Coffee during the winter of 1943. A transatlantic flight had turned back due to severe weather, and Sheridan sought to warm the stranded passengers. When asked if the coffee was Brazilian, he replied, "No, that's Irish Coffee" — naming the drink in a single quip. Travel writer Stanton Delaplane brought the recipe to San Francisco's Buena Vista Café in the 1950s, where it became a daily tradition.

## White Russian

Vodka, coffee liqueur, and cream—rescued from obscurity by *The Big Lebowski*.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz vodka
- 1 oz coffee liqueur
- Heavy cream (whipped or floated)

Build vodka and coffee liqueur in rocks glass over ice. Top with cream—either floated for visual effect or stirred for integration.

The White Russian evolved from the Black Russian in the 1950s with the simple addition of cream. While its exact creator remains unknown, the drink first appeared in print in California's *Oakland Tribune* on November 21, 1965.

The cocktail might have faded into obscurity without the 1998 film *The Big Lebowski*. Jeff Bridges' character "The Dude" drinks White Russians throughout the movie, creating a cultural association that made it impossible to order one without someone making a *Lebowski* reference.

## Black Russian

Just vodka and coffee liqueur—the foundation from which the White Russian and countless variations grew.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz vodka
- 1 oz coffee liqueur

Build in rocks glass over ice. Stir to combine.

Gustave Tops, a Belgian bartender at the Hotel Metropole in Brussels, created the Black Russian in 1949 to honor Perle Mesta, the U.S. Ambassador to Luxembourg. The name reflects both vodka's Russian association and the dark color of coffee liqueur. Some interpretations suggest the name evoked the mysterious atmosphere of the nascent Cold War. Regardless, the drink's simplicity proved enduring.

## Carajillo

Just espresso and Licor 43—a simpler alternative to the Espresso Martini showcasing coffee and vanilla harmony.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz Licor 43
- 2 oz espresso (or cold brew)
- Three espresso beans for garnish

Shake with ice until frosty. Strain into chilled coupe. Alternatively, build layered in rocks glass: Licor 43 over ice, espresso floated on top.

The Carajillo emerged in 19th century Spain, possibly created by Spanish soldiers in Cuba who added rum to their coffee for courage — "corajillo" meaning "little courage." The modern version combines fresh espresso and Licor 43, a Spanish liqueur with a distinctive vanilla profile.

Searches for Carajillo skyrocketed 118% year-over-year in 2024, making it one of the year's most popular cocktail discoveries.

# Modern Coffee

## Breakfast Italiano

Limoncello replaces coffee liqueur—an Italian lens on the Espresso Martini with bright lemon character.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz limoncello
- 1/2 oz vodka
- 1 oz espresso
- 1/4 oz simple syrup
- Lemon twist for garnish

Shake with ice until well-chilled and frothy. Strain into chilled coupe or Nick and Nora glass.

The Educated Barfly created this modern twist with a note: "I've been known to punk the Espresso Martini from time to time... AND IT IS DESERVED." The Breakfast Italiano reimagines the template through an Italian lens. The combination sounds strange but reflects Italian tradition — espresso with lemon peel is a classic pairing. The "breakfast" name positions this as a brunch-appropriate pick-me-up.

## The Nookie

Frangelico joins the espresso martini framework — nutty complexity evoking Nutella or hazelnut gelato.

### Recipe:

- 1 oz vodka
- 1 oz Frangelico
- 1 oz espresso
- 1/4 oz simple syrup
- Three coffee beans or grated hazelnut for garnish

Shake with ice until well-chilled and frothy. Strain into chilled coupe.

This modern creation bridges the Espresso Martini and Italian dessert traditions. The name emerged from bar culture's playful side, though the drink itself is sophisticated. Hazelnut and coffee are natural partners; adding Frangelico simply makes that pairing explicit.

## Parmesan Espresso Martini

TikTok's viral cocktail sensation — umami-rich cheese enhancing coffee's natural flavors.

### Recipe:

- 2 oz vodka
- 1 oz coffee liqueur
- 1 oz espresso (chilled)
- Pinch of sea salt
- Freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano for garnish
- Nutmeg for garnish (optional)

Shake vodka, coffee liqueur, espresso, and salt with ice until well-chilled and frothy. Strain into chilled coupe. Top with a blanket of freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano.

The Parmesan Espresso Martini accumulated over 328 million views under its TikTok hashtag in 2023. The pairing actually makes sense: Parmigiano Reggiano contains glutamates (the source of umami) that enhance coffee's natural flavors. The cheese's saltiness works like a pinch of salt in coffee — bringing out complexity and reducing bitterness. Quality matters immensely: authentic Parmigiano Reggiano works far better than generic parmesan. Grate extremely fine, creating delicate "snow" rather than chunks.

## Affogato Martini

Italian dessert tradition meets espresso martini—vanilla gelato "drowned" in coffee cocktail.

### Recipe:

- 1 oz espresso (freshly brewed and cooled)
- 1 oz coffee liqueur
- 1/2 to 1 1/2 oz vodka (or white rum)
- 1 scoop vanilla ice cream or gelato
- Chocolate-covered coffee beans for garnish

Place ice cream in martini or coupe glass. Shake espresso, coffee liqueur, and vodka with ice until well-chilled and frothy. Strain over ice cream.

Patrick Smith at New York's Maialino sought to transform the Espresso Martini into something more explicitly dessert-like. His solution: incorporate gelato, creating a cocktail that bridges the traditional Italian affogato ("drowned in coffee") and the modern espresso martini. Either vodka or aged rum work as the spirit base—rum adds warmth and depth, vodka keeps things cleaner.

# Dessert Classics

## Brandy Alexander

Creamy elegance from the early 20th century—brandy, crème de cacao, and cream in fashionable after-dinner form.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz brandy
- 1 oz crème de cacao (dark or white)
- 1 oz heavy cream
- Freshly grated nutmeg for garnish

Shake all ingredients with ice until well-chilled. Strain into chilled coupe.

The Brandy Alexander evolved from the original Alexander—a gin-based drink. Several origin theories compete: Troy Alexander at Rector's in New York; creation for Princess Mary's 1922 London wedding; or naming after various Alexanders.

The drink gained popularity during Prohibition, when its creamy sweetness helped mask lower-quality spirits. It became fashionable through the mid-20th century. John Lennon reportedly loved them, calling them "milkshakes."

## Grasshopper

Mint chocolate chip ice cream in cocktail form—cool, sweet, creamy, and vibrant green.

### Recipe:

- 1 oz crème de menthe (green)
- 1 oz crème de cacao (white)
- 1 1/2 oz heavy cream
- Mint sprig for garnish (optional)

Shake all ingredients with ice. Double strain into chilled coupe.

Philip Guichet, owner of Tujague's Restaurant in New Orleans, created the Grasshopper for a cocktail competition in New York City in 1918, where it secured second place. Tujague's continues serving it as a signature cocktail today. The vibrant green color gives the drink its name — it resembles the insect. The Grasshopper gained significant popularity in the 1950s and 1960s across the American South, with another resurgence during the disco era.

## Amaretto Sour

Almond liqueur meets citrus—rescued from one-dimensional sweetness by proper balance.

### Recipe:

- 1 1/2 oz amaretto
- 3/4 oz fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 oz simple syrup
- Lemon wheel or cherry for garnish

Shake all ingredients with ice. Strain into rocks glass over fresh ice.

The Amaretto Sour rose to prominence in the 1970s alongside the almond liqueur boom in America. Amaretto di Saronno's importer formally introduced the cocktail in 1974.

Amaretto itself carries Italian heritage — legend dates its creation to 1525 Saronno. The basic Amaretto Sour suffered from being too sweet and one-dimensional. Modern craft bartenders, particularly Jeffrey Morgenthaler, rescued the drink by adding bourbon for backbone and egg white for texture. This version keeps closer to the simpler original but benefits from fresh lemon juice and proper balance.

## Beyond These 12: The After-Dinner Landscape

Dessert and coffee cocktails continue evolving. The templates here accommodate endless variation.

**Espresso Martini Variations:** Beyond the Parmesan and Breakfast Italiano, try adding amaretto, Baileys, or nut liqueurs. The base formula – vodka, coffee liqueur, espresso – welcomes modification.

**Irish Coffee Evolution:** Experiment with different whiskeys, sweeteners (brown sugar, maple, honey), and cream techniques. The hot coffee format works with various spirits – try bourbon, rum, or brandy.

**Russian Family Tree:** The Black Russian spawned the White Russian; both can incorporate flavored vodkas, different coffee liqueurs, or cream alternatives.

**Forgotten Dessert Drinks:** The chapter covers essential dessert classics, but explore further: the Golden Cadillac (Galliano, crème de cacao, cream), the Pink Squirrel (crème de noyaux, crème de cacao, cream), or the Velvet Hammer (Cointreau, crème de cacao, cream).

**Temperature Play:** Irish Coffee proves hot drinks work. Explore other warm options, or go the opposite direction with frozen grasshoppers and blended coffee drinks.

These twelve cocktails provide sweet conclusions to any occasion. They prove that sophistication and indulgence aren't mutually exclusive – that cocktails can be dessert, that dessert can be cocktails, and that the right ending makes everything that preceded it better.





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Whiskey Sour, Daiquiri, Margarita, Sidecar, Pisco Sour,

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## **Highballs (Built, Carbonated)**

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## **Tropical & Tiki**

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## **Champagne & Sparkling**

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## **Coffee & Dessert**

Espresso Martini, Irish Coffee, White Russian, Black Russian, Carajillo, Brandy Alexander, Grasshopper, Affogato Martini, Parmesan Espresso Martini, Breakfast Italiano, The Nookie

## **Low-ABV & Aperitifs**

Americano, Bamboo, Chrysanthemum, Adonis, Sherry Cobbler, Vermouth Cocktail, Hugo, Garibaldi, Campari Spritz, White Noise, Limoncello Spritz, 2-2

# Glossary of Terms

**ABV (Alcohol by Volume):** The percentage of alcohol in a liquid. A 40% ABV spirit contains 40% pure alcohol.

**Amaro (pl. Amari):** Italian bitter liqueurs, typically herbal and bittersweet. Ranges from light (Aperol) to intensely bitter (Fernet-Branca).

**Aromatic Bitters:** Concentrated botanical extracts used in dashes. Angostura is the most common; others include Peychaud's and various orange bitters.

**Build:** To construct a drink directly in the serving glass rather than mixing separately.

**Chilling:** Reducing drink temperature through contact with ice. Proper chilling is essential for palatability.

**Coupe:** A shallow, stemmed glass with a wide bowl. The modern standard for most shaken cocktails.

**Crusta:** A drink style featuring a sugar-crusted rim and a long spiral of citrus peel lining the glass.

**Dash:** A small quantity of liquid, typically bitters. Approximately 1/32 oz or 10-12 drops.

**Dilution:** Water added to a cocktail through melting ice during preparation. Essential for balance; typically 20-30% of final volume.

**Double Strain:** Straining through both a Hawthorne strainer and a fine-mesh strainer to remove all particles.

**Dry:** Less sweet. A "dry" Martini uses less vermouth; "dry" vermouth is less sweet than "sweet" vermouth.

**Express:** To squeeze citrus peel over a drink to release aromatic oils, then optionally drop it in.

**Falernum:** A Caribbean syrup or liqueur flavored with lime, almond, ginger, cloves, and sometimes vanilla.

**Float:** To layer an ingredient on top of a drink by pouring gently over the back of a spoon.

**Fortified Wine:** Wine strengthened with added spirit. Includes vermouth, sherry, port, and Madeira.

**Free Pour:** Measuring by count or feel rather than using a jigger. Discouraged for precision.

**Garnish:** Decorative and aromatic additions to finished drinks. Functional garnishes add flavor; decorative ones add visual appeal.

**Hawthorne Strainer:** A strainer with a spring coil that fits over shaker tins.

**Jigger:** A measuring device for liquids, typically with two different-sized cups.

**Julep Strainer:** A perforated spoon-like strainer designed to fit inside a mixing glass.

**Muddle:** To crush ingredients to release flavors. Technique varies by ingredient.

**Neat:** A spirit served at room temperature without ice or mixers.

**On the Rocks:** Served over ice.

**Orgeat:** An almond-flavored syrup, essential for Mai Tais and other tiki drinks.

**Overproof:** Spirits with higher-than-standard alcohol content, typically above 50% ABV.

**Proof:** A measurement of alcohol content. In the U.S., proof = 2 x ABV (e.g., 80 proof = 40% ABV).

**Rinse:** Coating the inside of a glass with a small amount of spirit (often absinthe), then discarding the excess.

**Rocks Glass:** A short, wide tumbler for spirit-forward drinks. Also called an Old Fashioned glass.

**Roll:** To pour a drink back and forth between two vessels to mix without excessive aeration.

**Shake:** To vigorously agitate ingredients with ice in a sealed shaker. Chills, dilutes, and aerates.

**Simple Syrup:** Equal parts sugar and water, dissolved. The standard cocktail sweetener.

**Sour:** A cocktail formula combining spirit, citrus, and sweetener.

**Split Base:** Using two or more spirits as the drink's foundation.

**Stir:** To gently mix ingredients with ice using a bar spoon. Chills and dilutes without aeration.

**Straight Up:** Shaken or stirred with ice, then strained into a glass without ice.

**Swizzle:** A technique using a pronged stick rolled between the palms to mix and chill drinks.

**Tiki:** A cocktail movement featuring tropical ingredients, elaborate presentations, and Polynesian-inspired aesthetics.

**Top:** To add a final ingredient, typically carbonated, after other components are combined.

**Twist:** A piece of citrus peel, expressed for oils and used as garnish.

**Vermouth:** Aromatized, fortified wine. Available in dry (white), sweet (red), and blanc (white, sweet) styles.

**Whip Shake:** A brief shake with crushed ice to chill without excessive dilution.

## Technique Quick Reference

### When to Shake

- Drinks with citrus juice
- Drinks with dairy or cream
- Drinks with egg white
- Drinks with fruit purees
- Any drink requiring integration of disparate textures

**Standard shake:** 10-15 seconds with cubed ice

**Dry shake:** Without ice, to emulsify egg white before adding ice and shaking again

**Whip shake:** Brief shake with crushed ice for tiki drinks

## When to Stir

- Spirit-forward drinks without citrus
- Drinks where clarity matters
- Drinks where silky texture is desired

**Standard stir:** 20-30 seconds with cubed ice

## When to Build

- Highballs with carbonation
- Simple two-ingredient drinks
- Drinks where layering matters
- 

## Double Straining

Required for:

- Drinks with muddled herbs Drinks with egg white (for smoothness)
- Any drink where ice shards or particles are undesirable
- 

## Measurement Conversions

### Volume Equivalents

#### Measurement Ounces Milliliters

• 1 dash	1/32	oz 1 ml
• 1 barspoon	1/8	oz 4 ml
• 1/4 oz	0.25 oz	7.5 ml
• 1/2 oz	0.5 oz	15 ml
• 3/4 oz	0.75 oz	22 ml
• 1 oz	1 oz	30 ml
• 1 1/2 oz	1.5 oz	45 ml
• 2 oz	2 oz	60 ml

## Common Recipe Scaling

• **Single | Double | Party (8 servings)**

- 2 oz | 4 oz | 16 oz (2 cups)
- 1 oz | 2 oz | 8 oz (1 cup)
- 3/4 oz | 1.5 oz | 6 oz
- 1/2 oz | 1 oz | 4 oz
- 1/4 oz | 1/2 oz | 2 oz

**Citrus Yields (approximate)**

- **Fruit | Juice Yield**
- 1 lime | 1 oz (30 ml)
- 1 lemon | 1.5 oz (45 ml)
- 1 orange | 3 oz (90 ml)
- 1 grapefruit | 4-5 oz (120-150 ml)
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**Simple Syrups Reference**

**Standard Simple Syrup (1:1)**

Equal parts sugar and water by volume. Dissolve sugar in hot water; cool before use. Keeps refrigerated for 2-4 weeks.

**Rich Simple Syrup (2:1)**

Two parts sugar to one part water. Sweeter and more viscous; better for spirit-forward drinks. Keeps refrigerated for up to 6 weeks.

**Honey Syrup (1:1)**

Equal parts honey and warm water. Essential for Bee's Knees and Gold Rush. Use warm water to dissolve; keeps refrigerated for 2-3 weeks.

**Demerara Syrup (1:1 or 2:1)**

Demerara sugar dissolved in water. Richer, more complex sweetness. Common in tiki recipes.

## Cinnamon Syrup

Steep 4-6 cinnamon sticks in 2 cups simple syrup for 24 hours. Strain. Essential for Zombie and other tiki classics.

## Ginger Syrup

Simmer equal parts chopped fresh ginger and water for 45 minutes. Strain, measure liquid, add equal amount of sugar. Essential for Penicillin.

## Spirit Substitution Guide

### Whiskey

- **Bourbon** and **rye** are interchangeable in most recipes, with flavor differences
- **Scotch** works in place of Irish whiskey, with more smoke
- **Canadian whisky** substitutes for rye in a pinch

### Rum

- **White rum** and **silver rum** are identical
- **Gold rum** can replace aged rum with less complexity
- **Dark rum** often means blackstrap or heavily colored rum
- **Jamaican rum** adds funk; substitute with gold rum plus a barspoon of overproof

### Tequila

- **Blanco** and **silver** are identical
- **Reposado** works in margaritas for more depth
- **Mezcal** adds smoke; start with half-mezcal splits

### Brandy

- **Cognac** and **brandy** are interchangeable in most recipes

- **Pisco** is not interchangeable with other brandies
- **Calvados** (apple brandy) can replace Cognac in some applications

## Vermouth

- **Sweet vermouth** brands vary significantly; Carpano Antica is richer than Martini Rosso
- **Dry vermouth** is more consistent across brands
- **Blanc/bianco vermouth** can replace sweet vermouth for lighter drinks

## Bitter Liqueurs

- **Campari** has no direct substitute; Aperol is sweeter and less bitter
- **Aperol** can be approximated with Campari plus simple syrup
- **Amaro Nonino** and **Montenegro** are similar enough to swap
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## Essential Bottles by Chapter

### To Make Chapter 1 (Gin) Drinks

Gin, dry vermouth, sweet vermouth, Campari, maraschino liqueur, Chartreuse (green and yellow), creme de violette, orange liqueur, Benedictine, orgeat, falernum, passion fruit syrup

### To Make Chapter 2 (Vodka) Drinks

Vodka, orange liqueur, coffee liqueur, Chambord, Galliano, Passion fruit liqueur, cranberry juice

### **To Make Chapter 3 (Rum) Drinks**

White rum, aged rum, dark rum, overproof rum, cachaca, orange liqueur, maraschino liqueur, orgeat, falernum, cream of coconut

### **To Make Chapter 4 (Whiskey) Drinks**

Bourbon, rye, Scotch (blended), Irish whiskey, sweet vermouth, dry vermouth, Drambuie, Benedictine, Amaro Nonino, Aperol, honey

### **To Make Chapter 5 (Tequila) Drinks**

Blanco tequila, reposado tequila, mezcal, orange liqueur, Aperol, creme de cassis, Chartreuse (yellow), Ancho Reyes, falernum

### **To Make Chapter 6 (Brandy) Drinks**

Cognac/brandy, pisco, applejack, amaretto, maraschino liqueur, Chartreuse (green), Benedictine, creme de menthe, port, limoncello

### **To Make Chapter 7 (Champagne) Drinks**

Champagne/prosecco, Aperol, Campari, creme de cassis, Cognac, absinthe, peach puree

### **To Make Chapter 8 (Tiki) Drinks**

White rum, aged rum, Jamaican rum, overproof rum, Cognac, gin, vodka, tequila, Campari, Midori, blue curacao, falernum, orgeat, allspice dram, cinnamon syrup, passion fruit syrup

### **To Make Chapter 9 (Low-ABV) Drinks**

Sweet vermouth, dry vermouth, Campari, Aperol, sherry (fino, amontillado), elderflower liqueur, Benedictine, absinthe, Cocchi Americano, limoncello, prosecco

## **To Make Chapter 10 (Coffee) Drinks**

Vodka, coffee liqueur, Irish whiskey, Cognac/brandy, amaretto, Licor 43, Frangelico, creme de cacao, creme de menthe (green), limoncello, espresso

## **Acknowledgments and Sources**

This handbook draws on centuries of cocktail wisdom, from Jerry Thomas's 1862 *Bar-Tender's Guide* through the modern craft cocktail renaissance.

Key sources and influences include:

### **Historical References**

Jerry Thomas, *The Bar-Tender's Guide* (1862)

Harry Craddock, *The Savoy Cocktail Book* (1930)

Trader Vic, *Bartender's Guide* (1947, 1972)

David Embury, *The Fine Art of Mixing Drinks* (1948)

### **Modern Cocktail Literature**

Jeff Berry, *Sippin' Safari*, *Beachbum Berry Remixed*, and other tiki research  
Dale DeGroff, *The Craft of the Cocktail*

Gary Regan, *The Joy of Mixology*  
David Wondrich, *Imbibe!*  
and Punch  
Robert Simonson, *3-Ingredient Cocktails and A Proper Drink*

### **Recipe Development and Inspiration**

Death & Co, New York

The Educated Barfly

Dick Bradsell (*Espresso Martini*, *Bramble*)

Sam Ross (*Penicillin*, *Paper Plane*)

Phil Ward (*Oaxaca Old Fashioned*, *Division Bell*)

Audrey Saunders (*Old Cuban*)

Julio Bermejo (*Tommy's Margarita*)

## Organizations

International Bartenders Association (IBA) for official specifications Tales of the Cocktail and the broader bartending community

## About the Recipes

All recipes in this handbook have been tested and standardized using the following conventions:

**Measurements** are in U.S. fluid ounces. See conversion chart for metric equivalents.

**"Fresh" citrus juice** means squeezed within hours of use. Bottled juice produces inferior results in virtually all applications.

**Ice** refers to standard freezer cubes unless otherwise specified. Large cubes, crushed ice, and pebble ice are called for when they matter.

**Glassware suggestions** are recommendations, not requirements. Any appropriate vessel works.

**Garnishes** serve both functional and aesthetic purposes. Those listed contribute to the drinking experience; feel free to adjust for personal preference or availability.