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LIFE | FOOD & DRINK

## Why the Blender Drink Is Cool Again: A Guide

Frozen blender cocktails are finally getting the respect once reserved for their shaken and stirred counterparts. These recipes, all stone-cold stunners, plumb the depths of their appeal

By **KEVIN SINTUMUANG**

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Crunch, crack, bwwwwhirrrrr!

The sound of ice being pulverized to slush by a two-horsepower motor is not what you expect to hear when you walk into Suffolk Arms, a serious Manhattan craft-cocktail bar modeled on the archetypal English pub. But you'd best get used to it. The blender drink has begun to make its way into establishments where you'd feel more comfortable in wing tips than flip flops.

"The piña colada is the Manhattan of the frozen drink world," said Giuseppe González, the bartender and co-owner of Suffolk Arms. "And it deserves the same respect." He's spent much of his bartending career perfecting the drink the way others would fine-tune a Martini.

If that sounds silly to you, bear in mind that the frozen drink didn't always have a party-in-a-plastic-cup reputation. Hemingway drank daiquiris made in a blender at Havana's famous El Floridita, after all. In New Orleans, the frozen daiquiri has been as essential to the city's storied drinking culture as the Sazerac.

By the dawn of the craft cocktail renaissance a couple of decades ago, however, the blender drink was widely understood to be the floozy of the booze world,



Piña Colada PHOTO: F. MARTIN RAMIN/THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, FOOD STYLING BY HEATHER MELDROM, PROP STYLING BY ANNE CARDENAS, ICE SCULPTURE BY BRIAN BYRNE

best confined to bars one could swim up to. What better corrective, then, to the excesses of that renaissance than this unfairly maligned type of cocktail? As bars around the country pull back from the pretension and fussiness of drinks that take 15 minutes to mix, top mixologists are making space for the blender in their cocktail tool kit.

Brooklyn's Clover Club, one of the country's most influential bars specializing in pre-Prohibition cocktails, devotes a section of its menu to new frozen cocktails as well as blender classics like the Missionary's Downfall (white rum, mint, lime, pineapple, honey and crème de pêche). At Cassia, a Southeast Asian restaurant that opened to critical acclaim in Los Angeles last year, you'll find a piña colada built with house-made coconut liqueur, fresh coconut, lemongrass and verbena leaves.

There's an art to blender cocktails, too, it turns out. One sweltering recent afternoon, Mr. González, who claims to have made more frozen drinks than any other bartender in New York, invited me down to Suffolk Arms to teach me the finer points. This is a man who can tell whether a frozen drink is up to snuff just by looking at the size of its air bubbles. And while I could go further into the particulars of aeration, Brix measurements and the like, I don't have to because

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## Will It Blend?

We asked champions of the blended cocktail around the country to name their weapons of choice, and then we took each of them for a (ahem) spin.

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1 of 4

Mr. González distilled it all down to a magic ratio: 4 ounces of ice to every 1 ounce of liquid. That will get you the right slushy texture most of the time.

So break out the blender and start experimenting. The frozen-cocktail recipes below are a great place to start. There's a month of summer yet to come and, thankfully, no shame in raising these frozen, frothy, feel-good drinks.



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## 6 OF THIS SUMMER'S FINEST FROZEN DRINKS

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*Photos by F. Martin Ramin/The Wall Street Journal, Styling by Anne Cardenas, Food Styling by Heather Meldrom*

### Piña Colada

*A classic from Puerto Rico that migrated north in the 1950s, this truly is a vacation in a glass. There are other cream of coconuts out there, but Coco López is the original and really makes the drink.*

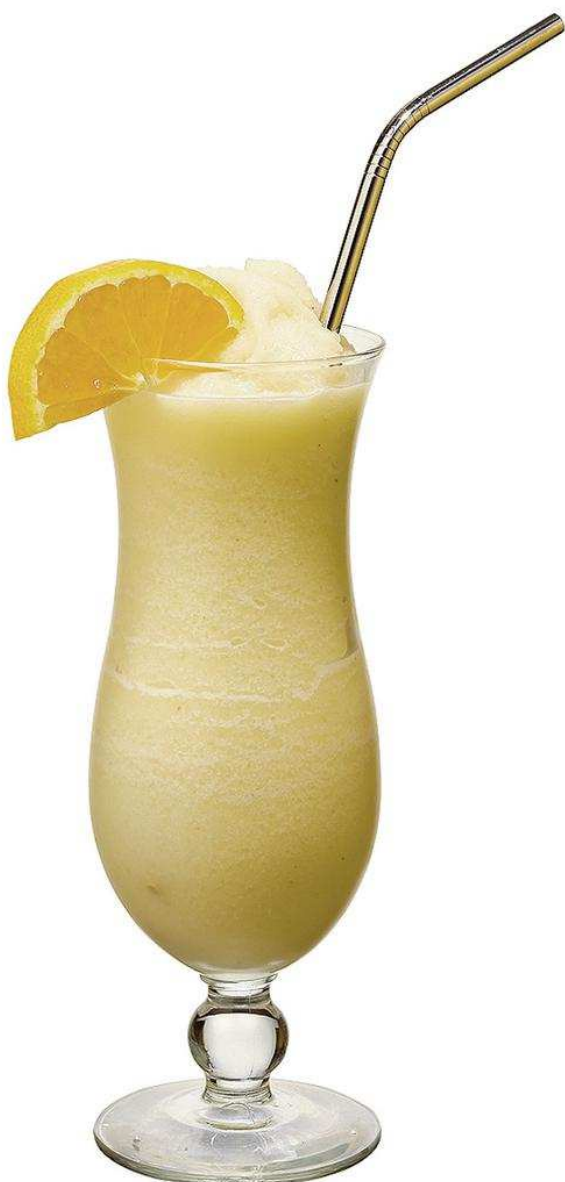
**MAKES:** 1 drink

Add 1½ ounces rum, 1½ ounces cream of coconut (preferably Coco López brand), 1½ ounces unsweetened pineapple juice, 4 large chunks pineapple and 1 pint ice to a blender. Blend until smooth, 30 seconds. Strain into a hurricane glass. Garnish with an orange slice.

*—Adapted from Giuseppe González of Suffolk Arms, Manhattan*

### Frozen Whiskey Smash

*A quarter lemon added to the blender, skin and all, brings a lip-smacking bitterness.*



Piña Colada

*MAKES: 1 drink*

Add 2 ounces bourbon, quarter lemon, seeded, 1 heaping teaspoon sugar, a few mint leaves, a pinch of salt and 1 cup ice to a blender. Blend until smooth. Pour into a glass of your choosing. Garnish with mint.

*—Adapted from Carl York of the Kirkland Tap & Trotter, Somerville, Mass.*

### **Grasshopper**

*Minty, chocolaty, rich and gorgeously smooth, this is what you'll want to end your summer night with. A splash of Fernet adds just the right curveball of complexity.*

*MAKES: 1 drink*

Add 1½ ounces green crème de menthe, 1 ounce white crème de

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cacao, 4 ounces vanilla ice cream, 1 ounce half-and-half, 1 teaspoon Fernet-Branca, a pinch of sea salt and 8 small ice cubes to a blender. Blend until smooth. Pour into a chilled Collins glass. Garnish with mint leaves.

*—Adapted from Jeffrey Morgenthaler of Pépé Le Moko, Portland, Ore.*

### **Frozen Irish Coffee**

*Anyone who's been to New Orleans knows the Hurricane cocktail, but in-the-know imbibers seek out the city's must-drink cult classic, the Frozen Coffee made in a soft-serve machine at French Quarter bar Erin Rose. The exact recipe is a secret, but Erin Rose was nice enough to give us some clues to help replicate it.*



Whiskey Smash

*MAKES: 1 drink*

Add 1 ounce coffee liqueur, 1 ounce brandy, 1 ounce cold-brew coffee or shot of espresso, 2 ounces whole milk, 1 scoop vanilla ice cream, 1 pint ice and 1½ ounces Irish whiskey to a blender. Blend until smooth, 30-40 seconds. Pour into a glass of your choosing. Garnish with a sprinkle of coffee grounds.

*–Adapted from Erin Rose, New Orleans*

**F’Rosé Y’all**

*How do you make rosé even more summery? Just freeze it.*

*MAKES: 1 drink*

\_\_\_\_\_ ounces simple syrup and 2 cups ice to a blender. Blend until smooth. Pour into a glass of your choosing. Serve with a straw.

*–Adapted from Kelly Fields of Willa Jean, New Orleans*

**Lime Daiquiri**

*Think frozen daiquiris are sweet silly abominations? Then you haven’t had this one, made the way they were during Hemingway’s heyday at El Floridita in Havana. Perfectly balanced and refreshing.*

*MAKES: 1 drink*

Add 2 ounces rum, ¾ ounce fresh lime juice, ½ tablespoon Demerara sugar, 1 tablespoon granulated sugar, ¼ teaspoon lime zest and 1½ cups ice to a blender. Blend on medium until smooth, about 20 seconds. Serve in a coupe glass.



Grasshopper

Garnish with lime  
zest.

*—Adapted from Paul  
McGee of Lost Lake,  
Chicago*

All you need to make a frozen drink is a Ziploc bag and a freezer. We learned this technique from Dave Arnold, author of “Liquid Intelligence” and co-founder of New York bar Booker and Dax. We tried it with frozen daiquiris, with great results. Here’s how to whip up drinks for two. One day before you plan to make the drinks, prepare the daiquiri mix: Combine 4 ounces 40% ABV white rum (such as Flor de Caña), 4 ounces filtered water, 1½

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ounces simple syrup and 2 pinches of salt in a large Ziploc bag and freeze. Before serving, add 1¾ ounces fresh lime juice, strained, to bag, reseal, and massage bag until fully combined and slushy. Serve in coupe glasses.





Frozen Irish Coffee

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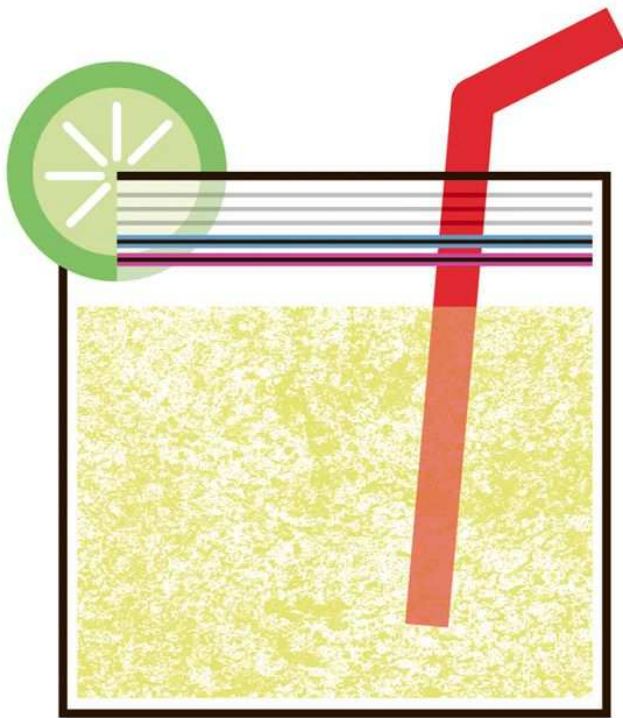


Daiquiri

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NO BLENDER? NO PROBLEM

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