

# CUTTING-EDGE COCKTAILS

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FASTER THAN YOU CAN ORDER A MANHATTAN, ANOTHER COCKTAIL TREND AWAITS YOU. BY ROBERT HAYNES-PETERSON

**W**e live in an exciting time when it comes to drinks. The so-called Cocktail Revolution, invoking premium spirits, fresh ingredients and careful measures, has evolved beyond trendy neo-

speakeasies to rooftop lounges and nightclubs. But this revolution is also an evolution, for 'round the corner, another intrepid bartender is crafting the next big drink.

**Organic Ingredients:** Five years ago, only a handful of organic spirits existed. Today there are organic tequilas, vodkas, single malts, bit-

ters, even sake. "To get USDA certification is very hard," says Henry Siedel of Chikurin, the only Japanese sake to hold that distinction. Not only does the rice need to be grown sans pesticides, but irrigation floodwaters from neighboring farms have to be gunk-free as well. In most cases, you're doing more to protect the environment

This may seem like an ordinary gin and tonic, but it features of-the-moment bar trends like hand-cracked Kold Draft ice, fresh small-bottle tonic, and trendy Copa glassware.

than your own body. But still, who needs Monsanto in their Mojito?

Says Paul Abercrombie, author of *Organic, Shaken and Stirred* (Harvard Common Press, 2009): “People [should] care about what’s in their glass, the same way they care about what’s on their plate.”

**Aged Cocktails:** The hottest geek trend of 2011: mixing up batches of classic cocktails, dropping them into used whiskey barrels or other containers, and aging for several weeks. Jeffrey Morgenthaler, bar manager at Portland’s Clyde Common, is widely credited for kicking off the trend in the U.S.

Aging a cocktail does the same thing as aging whiskey or tequila: “The edges are softened, but not in a way that makes the drink seem flabby,” says Morgenthaler.

“Anything with vermouth or fortified wine will be lightly oxidized and gain earthy notes that lend a lot of depth.” A second- or third-use barrel, like a bourbon or sherry cask, will also influence the final drink.

You’ll find aged cocktails in top-tier bars around the country, including the Boxcar Bar (Austin),

Girl & The Goat (Chicago), Grant Hotel (San Diego, where guests can purchase aged cocktails by the bottle), and Summit Bar (Manhattan). London’s Artesian bar, meanwhile, is mashing two hot trends by offering barrel-aged Mai Tais featuring clarified lime juice.

Act quickly if you hear of a new barrel being tapped at your favorite watering hole: Innovative batches can be drained in a single night by thirsty fans.

**Farm-to-Bar.** As in the restaurant world, bartenders are hot on local, farm-fresh ingredients. “Guests love a drink with a homegrown angle,” says Evan Powell, the mixologist for Fish restaurant in Charleston, SC. “I grow about a dozen herbs, including chocolate mint, lemon thyme and shiso.” At Idaho’s Shore Lodge in McCall, the staff picks wild huckleberries for mixologist John Wood’s huckleberry mojito. Meanwhile, in San Francisco, the Fairmont is raising its own honeybees and using the fresh honey in cocktails. And Murf Reeves at New Orleans’ Sylvain puts his 15 years as a cook

to good use behind the bar, emphasizing regional food pairings with mixed drinks.

**House-Made Mixers:** “Bitters is one of the three major components of classic cocktails,” says James Lee of Boulder, CO’s Bitter Bar. The once-ubiquitous astringent infusions are now used mostly to enhance aromas in cocktails. “You can’t really substitute for Angostura or Peychaud’s where they’re called for, but otherwise, the sky’s the limit.” Lee and his team make their own bitters using ingredients like Japanese five-spice, grapefruit and (in season) Rainier cherry bitters. At the new Lexington Social House in L.A., you’ll find house-made yuzu, lavender and orange bitters, along with Thai chili-infused simple syrup and even their own version of Pop Rocks to rim glasses.

For the new Theater Bar in New York City, owner/bartender Albert Trummer takes the house-made concept to new heights. The bar makes all its own liqueurs, tinctures, bitters and more, co-created with a doctor versed in homeopathic medicine. “Cordials that have artificial colorings and sweeteners sit on your liver, along with the alcohol,” says Theater bartender Duane Fernandez. “At the end of the day, even with cocktails, you want the most natural product you can have in your body.”

What’s coming up next? We’re already witnessing single filtered vodkas that actually have flavor, draft distilleries in almost every state, and 18th-century punch bowls that seduce scenesters and drinkers alike. Drop in to your favorite bar to discover what your own Mad Mixologist is concocting.

Both complex punch bowls and obscure European digestifs take center stage in cocktails at many of the trendiest bars around the country.

