

MIXOLOGY



Mix Like An Old Master

Tending bar at home doesn't have to be overwhelming

There are basic tools of the trade, and you'll need a working knowledge of the most popular mixed drinks — or access to an internet database of recipes. But otherwise, the process is fairly straight-forward if you follow certain basic guidelines.

SMALL STEPS

Begin with something you are intimately familiar, and only make one. Scaling up the ingredients for a pitcher of a favorite cocktail can wait for later. After you've mastered one drink, add another. Then try switching things up. Use a different garnish, mixer or spirit. As your confidence grows, you may eventually get to the point where you want to create your own one-of-a-kind cocktails. If you do, remember the 2:1:1 ratio, which encourages you to use two-parts of a spirit for the base, then one part sweet and another part sour. In this way, simple syrup or fruit juice is balanced in the mixture by lemon, bitters or lime juice.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Once you've established a solid 2:1:1 base, begin to build upon it with ginger ale, tonic water, soda or muddled fruits and herbs. The key here is to go slowly, add a single ingredient and then testing for flavor and balance. You can always



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add more of any single element in the cocktail, but you can't take things away. Don't muddle with too much strength. Herbs like mint, when crushed too hard, can take on a bitter flavor. Over muddled ingredients also take away from your presentation.

FINAL TOUCHES

Have some fun, since any mishaps will only involve a small part of your personal bar stock. Then take it up a notch by fashioning your own special additive like a mint-focused simple syrup. Use fresh fruits, rather than store-bought bot-

tlers, for the very best taste. Consider attractive garnishes, including mint leaves, fruit, vegetables or olives, depending on the flavor profile. Rimmed glasses also add flavor while upping the presentation.

Cocktails are often turbo-charged by the addition of

salt, sugar or cayenne, among other things. Simply rub a slice of lime or lemon around the rim of the serving glass, then press the overturned rim into a plate scattered with granular spices. Remember to pour slowly so that you don't wash everything away.

The History of Vodka

Do you know the origins of one of the most popular spirits?

Vodka forms the basis for the screwdriver, the Bloody Mary and the Moscow mule, among many other favorite cocktails. Most people understand the spirit to have come from Russia, but little else. In fact, vodka has roots much further away, and is increasingly made in a variety of other countries.

ORIGIN STORY

Many experts believe vodka is a descendant of the Mediterranean's legendary "water of life," a concentrated ethanol called aqua vitae. Traders were said to have brought it north to colder destinations like Poland and Russia. After that, it gets even more confusing. Vodka can be made from a variety of things, so as such this clear distilled beverage has no "recipe." It was most often created with fermented cereal grains or potatoes, but has since been made from fruits, sugar cane and honey, among other ingredients. What is standard is its alcohol by volume, which has been established in the European Union as 75 proof and in the U.S. as 80.

TRADITIONS ABOUND

In days gone by, vodka was drunk "neat," or without a mixer or garnishment. It's traditionally been present at



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family meals in Russian households, and may be chased with pickled mushrooms or cucumbers, a salt herring or a bite of buttered rye bread. Workers in Sweden's mines and forest were once partly paid with vodka. Mixed drinks became the norm as vodka's popularity grew outside of the so-called

vodka belt that also includes Belarus, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Ukraine. Other popular drinks include the vodka martini or tonic, the Cosmopolitan and the White or Black Russian, among others. However, many traditionalists still refuse to drink vodka as a cocktail.

FLAVORING REVOLUTION

One of the key elements of producing vodka is filtration, a process in which excess substances or flavors are drawn out of the final product. Old-school makers use methodical distillation, while others have developed or utilized more modern filters. A newer inno-

vation is the flavored vodka. This shift has made drinking vodka "neat" a much smoother proposition, while also leading to exciting new options for those who prefer a cocktail. The spirit's neutral base makes it perfect for pairing with flavors like raspberry, chocolate, grapefruit, chocolate and even coffee or bacon.

Rely On the Classics

Flashy cocktails come and go, but these old friends remain

There's a reason martinis, margaritas, the mai tai, daiquiris and mojitos have been popular for so long. They're relatively easy to make, endlessly drinkable and, in some cases, adaptable enough to spice things up every once in a while.

So the next time you're behind the bar at home, consider going old school. You can't go wrong by relying on the classics.

MARGARITA

Many mixologists are adding all kinds of twists to the margarita, but let's keep things simple. Add 1 1/2 ounces of tequila to an ice-filled cocktail shaker, then 1 ounce of triple sec and 3/4 of an ounce of fresh lime juice. Shake it all up and then strain into a glass with rimmed salt and ice.

MARTINI

Fill a pint glass up with ice, then add 3 ounces of gin or vodka and 1 ounce (or less) of dry vermouth. Stir well and then strain into a chilled martini glass with no ice. Add olives or a lemon twist to taste.

MAI TAI

This classic rum drink is basically a vacation in a glass. Fill a shaker with ice then add 1 ounce each of both dark and white rum, then 1 ounce of

fresh lime juice and a couple of dashes of bitters. Shake and then strain into a glass with ice. Add more island vibes by adding coconut or pineapple as a garnish.

DAIQUIRI

These frozen treats are

both simple to make and a quick way to cool down once the warmer months arrive. Fill up a cocktail shaker with cracked ice, add 2 ounces of white rum, 3/4 of an ounce of fresh lime juice and then 3/4 of an ounce of simple syrup. Shake well, add mixture to a

blender and then pour into a tall glass.

MOJITO

First, muddle 8 mint leaves in a cocktail shaker. (If you don't have an official muddler, feel free to use the back of any spoon.) Add ice, 2 ounces of

white rum, 3/4 of an ounce of fresh lime juice and then 1 ounce of simple syrup. Shake well, then strain into an ice-filled glass and adding another 1/2 ounce of chilled club soda. The garnish — a mint sprig — makes everything complete.



Canned Drinks Are Trending

Handy to-go versions of your favorites are suddenly everywhere

Canned booze used to simply mean beer. These days, you'll find a host of cocktails, hard lemonades, seltzers and wines in these portable and recyclable packages.

INSIDE THE NUMBERS

Canned drinks initially gained a wider foothold during the quarantine era, when bars and restaurants were closed. It's since become trendy with people who are active, and those who are looking for more low-alcohol options. The market for ready-to-drink cocktails is now expected to expand at an annual rate of 13.4% through 2030. They're handy for trips to the pool or beach, where glass isn't allowed. The smaller serving sizes also allow customers to try different flavors and varietals, without having to commit to a more expensive standard-sized bottle.

WINES

Chilled whites, sangrias and always-fashionable roses are perfect for the summer months, and canned options make them easy to stow and go. Ready-to-drink wine has also opened up the market to those who may have shied away from experimenting. These days, its popularity has even spread to old-school wine-loving areas like Europe,



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where canned wines were the second most preferred alcoholic beverage in 2021. The global market is projected to reach a whopping \$725.48 million by the end of the decade.

COCKTAILS

The fastest growing segment of canned drinks is booze, according to the Distilled Spirits Council of the U.S. In

fact, only vodka sales outpaced ready-to-drink cocktails by volume in 2021, as canned drinks also beat out whiskey, tequila, rum and mezcal. A big part of this trend is the convenience involved. These drinks are not only portable but save the consumer from having to buy spirits and all of the other needed ingredients. You know something has caught on when the

biggest distributors get in the game, and that's exactly what happened when Anheuser-Busch InBev bought Cutwater Spirits.

SPIKED WATER AND SELTZERS

Spiked waters and seltzer took off a few years ago because they pack more refreshment and less of an

alcoholic punch. Bartenders noticed, and you'll now find these canned drinks in bars and restaurants, as well. Variety packs also make it so easy to try new flavors. Sales have cooled some since skyrocketing by an eye-popping 127% in 2019 alone, but this segment has still seen growth of 64% in 2020 and 35% in 2021.

How to Order

Getting just what you want at a bar can be an intimidating experience

Mixologists who are just getting started and occasional drinkers might not be familiar with the terms being thrown around. Not knowing the difference can have a huge impact on the quality of drink you end up with, and how much it costs. Wine has always been a complex subject to fully grasp. These days, even ordering a beer has become an adventure in styles.

Here's how to sort through it all.

WELL VS. CALL

You'll see differing prices for well drinks and "call" drinks, which are sometimes also referred to as "top shelf." Well drinks are so named because they've been traditionally kept in an easy-to-reach area below the bar. They're the cheapest options, but also the lowest quality. Anytime you order a drink without mentioning a specific brand of liquor, it's likely to be made with a well version. Those on a budget will note that well drinks are typically the focus of happy hour or other specials. Ask for a pricing list before ordering a call drink, if the cost isn't posted within view. You don't want to be surprised when the bill arrives.

DRINK PREPARATION

Once you've decided on

which spirits you'd like, it's time to discuss how you'd like it prepared. "Neat" drinks are served without ice. Whiskeys arrive at room temperature, while vodka might be chilled. If you'd like your drink served over ice, order it "on the rocks." This quickly chills the drink, but

may also eventually water it down. That process is sometimes preferred with whiskey, but may be less favorable for those drinking a mixed drink. If you'd like to switch things up with a martini, consider ordering it with olive juice. Those are called "dirty" martinis.

BEER AND WINE

The rise of craft and local breweries has led to an explosion of choices that go well beyond the most familiar styles of lagers, pilsners or ales. Wines have always been a maze of interesting choices. If you don't have time to study it all, consider describing the

kind of wine or brand of beer that you usually enjoy. The bartender should be able to match that with something they currently have. With beers and wines on tap, you can also typically ask for a taste to see if it really does mirror you're regular favorite's flavor profile.



Why Rum Became So Popular

Things could get tricky at sea during the Age of Exploration

A 18th century sugar craze in Europe inadvertently led to a spirit we call rum. Caribbean planters were left with a dark, thick syrup after the sugar refining process. Slaves on these plantations fermented the discarded material, called molasses, and rum was created. How it became so popular is another tale of adventure and misfortune.

DON'T DRINK THE WATER

The period between the 15th and 18th centuries has been called the Age of Exploration. It was a time when adventurers, explorers, navy men and pirates set out on the open water in hopes of discovery. These journeys would take weeks and months to complete, however, and by then their rations of water would have gone stale or bloomed with algae. Sometimes, the water was polluted before it ever arrived on the ship, especially those that sourced the rancid Thames River. They had no such problems with rum, because of the alcoholic byproduct of fermentation.

RUM AS AN ALTERNATIVE

Soon, rum became the drink of choice. In fact, sailors in the British Royal Navy were given a ration beginning



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in the mid 1600s. The rum would be served “neat,” at first, with perhaps a bit of lime juice. Soon rowdiness and alcoholism swept through the ships at sea. Edward Teach, who was better known as “Blackbeard,” was said to have inadvertently left a passed-out fellow pirate on a tiny South Carolina island

after a particularly rowdy night of rum.

Captains soon ordered the rum watered down into a mixture known as “grog,” and the British Navy rations actually continued until the turn of the 1970s. The term “groggy,” meaning dazed and unsteady, remains a part of our language.

HOW IT'S MADE

Rum is still made with fermented molasses, but nowadays the spirit is distilled and filtered, before transferred into oak barrels for aging. Many rums are then blended to increase their smoothness. Different factors in this process produce white, golden or dark, and premium rums —

and each is consumed differently. White, or light, rums are typically used in cocktails and frozen drinks. Darker rums are consumed on the rocks or “neat,” and make great additions to cooking recipes. Premium rums are so full bodied that they are exclusively poured over ice or straight up in a glass.

Not Your Grandfather's Moonshine

Bootleg spirits of old have officially moved into the mainstream

Moonshine used to be exclusively associated with the Prohibition era, as bootleggers made illegal liquor in home stills then transported it for sale in souped-up cars to avoid the authorities. The result was a clear, high-proof whiskey without the barrel-aged characteristics of its officially distilled cousin.

More recently, however, moonshine has made a return as a mainstream spirit, consumed in tasting rooms, distilleries, bars and restaurants. Here's how this formerly outlawed spirit made such an incredible transition.

HOW IT BEGAN

The 18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution banned alcohol's manufacturing, sale and distribution between 1920 and 1933, when the amendment was repealed. Moonshine wasn't new to the era, having sprung up around the time of the tax-related Whiskey Rebellion in the 1790s. But it soared in popularity during Prohibition as bootleggers from the Appalachian Mountain region worked to keep up with what was suddenly a nation-wide demand. Moonshine remained popular into the Depression era, because it was so cheap, but eventually faded from the national consciousness. For decades, its best-known mod-



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ern era legacy was NASCAR, which began as a racing circuit featuring former bootleggers.

MODERN RESURGENCE

The first modern-era legal moonshining operation was reportedly launched in 2005 by Piedmont Distillers in North Carolina. They were soon joined by many, many others — including American

Born, Firefly, Appalachian Co., Full Throttle, Catdaddy, Midnight Moon, Georgia Moonshine, and Ole Smoky Tennessee Moonshine, among others. Today, the worldwide market for moonshine is expected to grow some 7% annually through 2032. Perhaps predictably, North America accounts for a lot of those sales, with 35% of the market. But Europe actually accounts for more, represent-

ing some 41% of global moonshine sales.

CHANGING FLAVOR PROFILE

Today's legally made moonshine often trades the strong flavors of traditional corn mash for added sweeteners, often recalling fruit, desserts or mint. For instance, Ole Smoky Distillery expanded distribution in 2022 for two of its newest, fastest-growing fla-

vors — banana pudding cream and white chocolate strawberry cream. Moonshine can be consumed neat, or mixed with colas, vermouth and bitters, or even ice tea. Of course, some question whether something that's legally produced should be called moonshine at all. As that debate continued, many illicit stills continue to operate, as documented on the Discovery Channel's "Moonshiners."