

Summer Drinks



Mixing the Outdoors in a Glass

Step into a summer garden and you'll find a cocktail menu waiting to happen.

Botanical cocktails draw inspiration from herbs, flowers and aromatic plants, transforming familiar drinks into something more layered and sensory. A sprig of rosemary, a handful of basil or a whisper of lavender can shift a drink from simple to striking, adding fragrance as much as flavor.

Herbs bring brightness or earthiness, while florals add delicate, sometimes slightly sweet notes. The key is restraint — too much can overwhelm, but just enough creates a drink that feels fresh and intentional. Citrus often plays a supporting role, lifting the botanicals and keeping the overall profile crisp.

There's also a visual elegance to botanical cocktails. Edible flowers, herb sprigs and clear glassware turn each drink into a small composition, echoing the colors and textures of the garden itself. It's part of the appeal: these beverages invite a pause, a moment to take in the aroma before the first sip.

Here are some drinks to try.

LAVENDER GIN FIZZ

Floral lavender syrup paired with gin, lemon and sparkling water for a light, aromatic cocktail. Recipe from A Full Living.

Ingredients

Lavender Simple Syrup

1 1/2 tablespoons dried culinary



© ADOBE STOCK

lavender buds

1 tablespoon butterfly pea flowers optional, gives the syrup a natural purple color!

1 cup water

1 teaspoon freshly squeezed lemon juice optional, reacts with the butterfly pea flowers to lighten the color of the syrup

1 cup sugar

Lavender Gin Fizz

1/2 ounce lemon juice

1 ounce lavender simple syrup

1 1/2 ounces gin

1 whole egg white

Ice for the cocktail shaker
Lavender buds for garnish

Directions

1. Add the water, lavender, and butterfly pea flowers to a pot. Bring to a boil, then immediately reduce to a simmer for 5-10 minutes. Add in the optional squeeze of lemon to make the water turn from blueish to purple.

2. Next, strain the lavender water mixture into a separate container through a metal sieve. Discard the flowers. Add the lavender water mixture back to the pot over low heat. Add in the sugar, and stir until the sugar dissolves, then remove it from the heat. Allow it to cool down completely before making this drink.

3. Add lemon juice, lavender simple syrup, gin, and an egg white to a cocktail shaker with no ice. Shake vigorously for 30 seconds to create a foamy top.

4. Add ice to the shaker, and shake again to chill. Strain into a glass, and garnish with lavender buds. Enjoy!

BASIL GIMLET

Fresh basil adds a green, slightly peppery note to this citrus-forward classic. Recipe from Cookie and Kate.

Ingredients

8 medium basil leaves

1 1/2 ounces gin

1 lime, juiced

1 to 2 teaspoons agave nectar or simple syrup, to taste

Directions

1. In a cocktail shaker or mason jar, gently muddle the basil leaves.

2. Add lime juice, agave nectar and gin.

3. Fill with ice, securely fasten the lid and shake well.

4. Strain into a martini glass.

A Cuppa Joe Under the Sun

Coffee doesn't clock out when the temperature rises.

Instead, it changes costumes, trading steaming mugs for ice, citrus and a surprising range of cocktail companions. Cold brew cocktails bring together the smooth, low-acid richness of chilled coffee with spirits and mixers that highlight its chocolatey, nutty and sometimes fruity notes.

What makes cold brew especially suited for cocktails is its balance. Because it's brewed slowly in cold water, it tends to be less bitter than traditional iced coffee, creating a softer base that plays well with everything from vodka to whiskey to tonic water. The result is a drink that feels refreshing but still carries that familiar caffeine kick.

These beverages span a wide spectrum. Some lean indulgent, like the ever-popular espresso martini or creamy after-dinner sips. Others take a lighter approach, pairing cold brew with citrus or sparkling elements for a crisp, almost tea-like experience. Coffee tonics, for example, combine espresso or cold brew with tonic water for a bright, slightly bitter drink that's surprisingly thirst-quenching.

ESPRESSO MARTINI

A modern classic combining espresso, vodka and coffee liqueur for a rich, frothy cocktail. Recipe from Liquor.com.



© ADOBE STOCK

Ingredients

2 ounces vodka
1/2 ounce coffee liqueur (usually Kahlúa)

1 ounce espresso, freshly brewed (or cold brew concentrate)
1/4 ounce simple syrup
Garnish: coffee beans

Directions

1. Add vodka, coffee liqueur, espresso and simple syrup to a shaker filled with ice and shake until well-chilled.
2. Strain into a chilled cocktail glass.
3. Garnish with three coffee beans.

ESPRESSO TONIC

A refreshing mix of

espresso or cold brew with tonic water and citrus. Recipe from Serious Eats.

Ingredients

4 fluid ounces chilled tonic water (120ml), plus more if desired
1 freshly brewed shot espresso (about 1 fluid ounce; 30ml) or other strongly brewed coffee
Simple syrup or oleo-saccharum, to taste (optional, see notes)
Lemon peel (optional, see notes)

Directions

Fill a large glass with ice. Add tonic water to glass. Brew espresso and pour on top. Sweeten to taste (about 1/2 teaspoon at a time) with syrup and/or add more tonic to

taste, if desired. Garnish with lemon peel, if desired. Serve right away.

Notes: Tonic water is already sweetened, so whether you want additional sweetness, and how much, is up to you. This drink is highly adaptable, so feel free to play with syrups with different flavor profiles: While simple syrup is neutral, other options like oleo-saccharum (lemon syrup), maple syrup, and more can work great.

Garnishes and flavorings are similarly optional. Lemon peel pairs nicely with this drink, but a couple drops of orange flower water, grapefruit zest, and many other flavorings are possible. Have fun with it!

ICED IRISH COFFEE

Chilled version of the classic, featuring coffee, Irish whiskey and lightly sweetened cream. Recipe from Real Simple.

Ingredients

4 ounces strong coffee, chilled
1 tablespoon simple syrup
1 2/3 ounces Irish whiskey
1 ounce heavy cream

Directions

1. Combine coffee, simple syrup, whiskey, and cream in an ice-filled cocktail shaker.
2. Shake vigorously until very cold, about 30 seconds, and then strain into an ice-filled pint glass and top with whipped cream (if desired).

Farm-to-Glass Drinks

Summer has a way of turning even the simplest ingredients into something memorable.

At farmers markets and roadside stands, fruits and herbs reach their peak — ripe, fragrant and ready to be transformed. Increasingly, those ingredients are finding their way into glasses as well as on plates, giving rise to the farm-to-glass movement.

This approach to beverages mirrors the farm-to-table philosophy, emphasizing freshness, locality and seasonality. The result is a drink that doesn't just taste good, it tells a story about where and when it was made.

FROM MARKET TO MIXER

Farm-to-glass drinks begin with what's available right now. Early summer might bring strawberries, rhubarb and tender herbs, while later months offer peaches, tomatoes and melons. Rather than relying on bottled syrups or artificial flavors, these drinks highlight the natural sweetness and complexity of fresh produce.

A handful of berries muddled into a glass, a slice of cucumber added to sparkling water or a sprig of basil paired with citrus can instantly elevate a beverage. The combinations are often simple, allowing the ingredients to shine without too much



© ADOBE STOCK

interference.

Local sourcing is part of the appeal. Visiting a nearby farmers market provides access to high-quality produce, and invites a sense of connection to growers, to the land and to the rhythms of the season. For many, that connection is just as satisfying as the drink itself.

FLAVOR THAT FOLLOWS THE CALENDAR

One of the defining features of farm-to-glass beverages is their fleeting nature. Because

they rely on seasonal ingredients, the flavors change throughout the summer. A strawberry lemonade in June gives way to a peach iced tea in July and a watermelon cooler in August.

Herbs play a supporting role, adding aroma and depth. Mint and basil are common choices, but thyme, rosemary and even lavender can bring a subtle complexity. These elements can be infused into simple syrups, steeped into teas or used fresh as garnishes.

Sweetness is often adjusted to suit the ingredients. A perfectly ripe peach may need little more than a splash of sparkling water, while tart fruits like raspberries might benefit from a touch of honey or agave. The goal is balance rather than uniformity.

SIMPLE TECHNIQUES, BIG IMPACT

Creating farm-to-glass drinks at home doesn't require specialized equipment. Basic techniques — muddling, infusing and blending — are

enough to unlock flavor. Muddling gently releases juices and oils, while infusing allows herbs or fruits to steep into liquids over time.

Batching is also an option, especially for gatherings. Preparing a pitcher of fruit-forward punch or infused water ahead of time makes it easy to serve guests while showcasing seasonal ingredients.

Even ice can play a role. Freezing berries or herb leaves into ice cubes adds both visual appeal and a slow release of flavor as the drink chills.

Travel the World

Across continents, warm-weather beverages are shaped by climate, culture and whatever happens to be growing nearby.

In Spain, that might mean stretching wine with citrus and soda to keep things light in the heat. In Brazil, it's freshly muddled limes and sugar balanced with a splash of sugarcane spirit. In South Korea, fruit and soju come together in colorful, easygoing combinations meant for sharing.

What unites these drinks is a sense of practicality and pleasure. They're designed to refresh rather than overwhelm, often using simple ingredients and straightforward techniques. Many are built directly in the glass or pitcher, making them approachable for home bartenders and ideal for gatherings.

Exploring international summer sips is less about mastering complex recipes and more about discovering new flavor pairings and traditions. Each drink offers a small window into how different cultures stay cool — and celebrate — when temperatures rise.

CAIPIRINHA (BRAZIL)

Recipe from Liquor.com.

Fresh lime, sugar and cachaça create Brazil's signature cocktail. Bright, tart and slightly grassy.

Ingredients

- 1 lime, cut into wedges
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 2 ounces cachaça
- Garnish: lime wheel

Directions

1. In a double rocks glass, muddle the lime wedges and sugar.



© ADOBE STOCK

2. Fill the glass with ice, add the cachaça, and stir briefly.
3. Garnish with a lime wheel.

SOJU WATERMELON COCKTAIL (SOUTH KOREA)

Soju is mixed with fresh fruit or juice, often watermelon, peach or citrus, for a low-key, shareable drink. Recipe from Maanchi. Serves 4-8.

Ingredients

- 2 small seedless watermelons, kept in the fridge
- 2 bottles of soju, kept in the fridge (about 4 cups' worth)
- 2 cups of ice cubes

Directions

1. Cut off the top of watermelon. Scoop the flesh out with a spoon and put it in a blender. Set aside the watermelon bowls.
2. Blend the watermelon flesh for 1 minute, until smooth.
3. Set a fine-mesh strainer over a bowl and pour the blended watermelon through it. Press down with a spoon to strain it well. Discard the pulp. Remove the foam from the top with a spoon.
4. Measure 4 cups of blended watermelon juice and put it into a pitcher. Add 4 cups of soju and mix well.
5. Pour the mixture into the watermelon bowl and add ice cubes.
6. Serve cold with a green onion pancake.

PIMM'S CUP (UNITED KINGDOM)

A garden-party staple featuring Pimm's No. 1, lemonade and plenty of fresh fruit and herbs. Recipe from GoodFood.

Ingredients

- 200 milliliters Pimm's No. 1
- 600 milliliters lemonade
- Mint sprigs, sliced cucumber, sliced orange and strawberries, to serve

Directions

Fill a jug with ice and pour over the Pimm's and lemonade. Give it a good stir then add the mint, cucumber and fruit.

Go Back in Time

Some flavors don't just refresh, they time travel.

A sip of orange and vanilla can summon a melting creamsicle on a front porch. Lemonade might echo paper cups at a childhood stand, coins clinking in a jar. This trend leans into those memories, re-imagining familiar favorites with a grown-up twist that feels playful without losing its sense of comfort.

Nostalgic sips take recognizable flavor profiles — root beer floats, fruit punch, chocolate milk — and elevate them with higher-quality ingredients, balanced sweetness and a splash of alcohol. The goal isn't to reinvent these classics beyond recognition, but to refine them. Real fruit juices replace artificial syrups. Craft sodas stand in for mass-produced versions. Spirits are chosen to complement rather than overpower.

Nostalgic sips invite drinkers to revisit familiar flavors in a new way, one that blends the carefree spirit of childhood with the creativity of the present. Try these at your next gathering:

BOOZY CREAMSICLE FLOAT

Recipe from Spaceships and Laser Beams.

Ingredients

2 to 3 scoops vanilla ice cream, about 1 cup or enough to fill the glass to your liking
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 ounce vodka
1 ounce Triple Sec, or Grand Marnier
4-6 ounces orange soda

Directions

1. Fill a tall glass with vanilla ice cream.
2. Add vanilla extract, vodka and Triple Sec over the ice cream.
3. Carefully pour orange soda over the ice cream to fill the glass.

Notes: You can add any amount of ice cream, but the float looks great with at least a couple of scoops

of ice cream in there. The orange soda fizzes quite a bit when poured over the ice cream, so pour slowly and refill once the bubbles die down a bit.

CHERRY COLA OLD FASHIONED

A richer version of a soda fountain favorite, often featuring whiskey or rum with cherry and cola. Recipe from Twin Fin Rum.

Ingredients

30 milliliters Twin Fin black cherry rum
30 milliliters Tinner Bros wild cherry whisky
10 milliliters cola syrup (or cola)
2 dashes angostura bitters
1 dash cherry bitters
Garnish with orange peel and a maraschino cherry

Directions

In a mixing glass, add the bitters, cola syrup, cherry rum and bourbon. Add ice and stir until well chilled (about 20–25 seconds). Strain into a rocks glass over a large ice cube. Express the orange peel over the drink and drop it in. Garnish and enjoy!

BOOZY BAILEYS OREO MILKSHAKE

Ice cream blended with liqueurs like Baileys or Kahlúa for a dessert-style drink. Recipe from The Chunky Chef. Serves 4.

Ingredients

2 pints vanilla ice cream, slightly softened
10 Oreo cookies
2 ounces Baileys Irish cream (about 1/4 cup)
2 ounces vanilla vodka (about 1/4 cup)
Drizzle of chocolate syrup
Chocolate jimmies (long sprinkles)
Cookies 'n' creme chocolate bar

Directions

1. Drizzle chocolate syrup on a small plate and add chocolate jimmies to another small plate. Dip rim of glasses into chocolate syrup, then into the jimmies. Set aside or refrigerate.
2. Add ice cream, cookies, Baileys, and vodka to blender and blend until smooth and creamy. Pour into glasses. Garnish with a piece of the cookies 'n' creme bar and enjoy responsibly!



Backyard Bar Essentials

There's a certain magic to a summer gathering: the hum of conversation, the clink of ice in a glass, the sense that time has stretched just enough to savor it.

A well-prepared backyard bar helps create that atmosphere, allowing hosts to spend less time mixing and more time enjoying the moment.

The secret isn't an elaborate setup. It's thoughtful planning, a few quality ingredients and a bit of prep work done ahead of time.

STOCKING THE BASICS

A versatile backyard bar starts with a streamlined selection of spirits and mixers. Rather than trying to cover every possible cocktail, focus on a few crowd-friendly options: vodka, gin, rum and tequila provide a solid foundation. From there, build out with mixers like tonic water, club soda and a simple citrus juice such as lemon or lime.

Wine and beer deserve a place at the table as well, offering easy options for guests who prefer something ready to pour. A chilled white wine or rosé and a light summer beer can cover a wide range of tastes without requiring any extra effort.

Don't overlook the details



© ADOBE STOCK

that elevate a drink. Fresh garnishes — citrus slices, berries or herbs — add both flavor and visual appeal. A simple tray with mint, basil and orange wedges can instantly make even the most basic beverage feel intentional.

PREP AHEAD FOR EASE

The real key to effortless entertaining is preparation. Mixing a few batch cocktails in advance allows hosts to skip the constant measuring and shaking once guests

arrive. Sangria, margaritas or a simple punch can be made hours or even a day ahead and kept chilled until serving.

Pre-squeezing citrus juice, slicing garnishes and filling ice trays may seem small, but these steps make a noticeable difference. Having everything ready means drinks come together quickly, keeping the flow of the gathering uninterrupted.

Ice, in particular, deserves attention. Large batches of ice cubes or even a block of ice in

a cooler help keep drinks cold without constant refilling. On hot days, that can be the difference between a relaxed afternoon and a scramble to keep up.

SET THE SCENE

Presentation can be simple yet effective. A dedicated table or cart keeps everything organized and accessible, encouraging guests to help themselves. Grouping items — spirits together, mixers in another area, garnishes within

reach — creates a natural flow.

Glassware doesn't need to be complicated. A mix of sturdy tumblers and wine glasses will handle most drinks. For larger gatherings, reusable cups or labeled glasses can help guests keep track of their drinks.

Shade and temperature also play a role. Keeping beverages out of direct sunlight and using coolers or insulated containers helps maintain quality, especially during peak afternoon heat.

Trend Alert: Wellness Tonics

Summer's drink menu is getting a thoughtful refresh.

Alongside spritzes and frozen cocktails, a new category is taking shape: Herbal and wellness tonics. These beverages lean on botanicals, adaptogens and functional ingredients to create drinks that are as intentional as they are refreshing. The result is a glass that feels equally at home at a backyard gathering or a quiet moment of self-care.

A NEW KIND OF HAPPY HOUR

Wellness tonics are part of a broader shift toward mindful drinking. Some recipes include alcohol, but many are low-ABV or alcohol-free, allowing flavors and ingredients to take center stage. The focus is less on buzz and more on balance—both in taste and in how the drink fits into a person's overall routine.

Adaptogens are a key player. These plant-based ingredients, such as ashwagandha, holy basil and reishi mushrooms, are often associated with helping the body manage stress. While research is ongoing and results can vary, their earthy, complex flavors have made them a natural fit for modern mixology. Paired with citrus, honey or sparkling water, they create drinks that feel layered and nuanced rather than overly sweet.

Herbal infusions also bring depth and aroma. Fresh mint,



© ADOBE STOCK

basil, rosemary and lavender can transform a simple beverage into something more aromatic and memorable. A sprig of thyme in a lemonade or a hint of sage in a grapefruit spritz adds a garden-fresh quality that feels tailor-made for summer.

FLAVOR MEETS FUNCTION

Functional beverages go beyond herbs and adaptogens to

include ingredients chosen for specific purposes. Electrolytes, for example, can be incorporated into lightly flavored waters or mocktails designed for hot days. Ginger and turmeric add warmth and a subtle kick, while also being widely appreciated for their traditional roles in supporting digestion and overall wellness.

Tea-based tonics are another popular option. Green tea, hibiscus and chamomile offer

distinct flavor profiles and can be brewed ahead, chilled and combined with fruit or sparkling elements. These drinks are especially appealing for those seeking a gentle lift without the intensity of coffee or alcohol.

Sweeteners in these beverages tend to be used sparingly. Honey, agave or fruit juices often replace refined sugar, allowing the natural flavors of the ingredients to shine. The

goal is a drink that feels clean and refreshing rather than heavy.

Creating herbal and wellness tonics at home can be simple. Start with a base — sparkling water, brewed tea or coconut water — then layer in herbs, citrus and a functional ingredient of choice. Even a basic combination of lemon, mint and honey can serve as a starting point, with room to experiment from there.