

Supplies:

- barware: cocktail glass, coupe, strainers, juice press, jiggers, shakers
- spirits (williams): bourbon, brandy, cointreau, plymouth, Angostura bitters
- spirits (home): Rothman and Winter Creme de Violette, Luxardo Maraschino, Pisco, Amargo bitters
- citrus: 2 limes, 4 lemons, 1 egg
- sundries: ice chest, ice, two water pitchers, paring knife, cutting board, medicine dropper

1 Origin of the Cocktail

The Oxford English Dictionary entry for *cocktail* reads

3. [A slang name, of which the real origin appears to be lost.]
 - a. A drink, consisting of spirit mixed with a small quantity of bitters, some sugar, etc. orig. U.S.

and cites the 28 April 1803 *Farmer's Cabinet* as the first known printing of the word:

Drank a glass of cocktail—excellent for the head... Call'd at the Doct's... drank another glass of cocktail.

Unfortunately, the actual *Farmer's Cabinet* is no where to be found. Felten [7] notes that at present, the first existing printing of the work *cocktail* appears in the 06 May 1806 edition of the *Balance and Columbian Repository*, a Federalist newspaper from Hudson New York. In describing a candidate's attempt to buy votes, the paper tells of a booze bash that included the drinking of twenty-five dozen cocktails. It turns out this didn't help: the candidate lost.

A definition of cocktail arrived the following week when a reader inquired about never having heard of this "species of refreshment." The editor replied:

Cocktail, then is a stimulating liquor, composed of spirits of any kind, sugar, water and bitters it is vulgarly called a bittered sling, and is supposed to be an excellent electioneering potion inasmuch as it renders the heart stout and bold, at the same time that it fuddles the head. It is said also, to be of great use to a democratic candidate: because, a person having swallowed a glass of it, is ready to swallow any thing else.

The key element here is bitters—aromatic, non-potable bitters—a maceration of botanicals (roots, herbs, and barks) that is used to both soften the roughness and enhance the flavor of the spirit. So in the early nineteenth century, to be a cocktail, meant to be a spirituous drink involving aromatic bitters.

Etymology

In *The Joy of Mixology*, Regan [11] outlines several anecdotes on the etymology of the word *cocktail*. The two most plausible explanations include:

- Antoine Amedie Peychaud (of Peychaud's Bitters fame) evidently opened an apothecary in New Orleans and sold a stomach remedy that combined his bitter with brandy. This was served in an eggcup which in French is called a *coquetier*. Americans may have warped the pronunciation into the similar sounding *cocktail*. According to [11], this explanation first appears in Arthur [2]. Unfortunately, the Peychaud's apothecary did not open until 1838—well after the first printed mention of *cocktail* in the *Balance and Columbian Repository*.
- The explanation that Regan accepts comes from Mencken [10] which explains that the tap on a spirit barrel is call a *cock* and the bits at the bottom of the barrel are called the *tail*. Evidently the tails of many spirit barrels were often mixed together and offered at a reduced price, leading to the mixed drink being called a *cocktail*.

2 Taxonomy

So, originally, a cocktail was a bittered sling—spirit, sugar, water and bitters [8]. Add an orange twist and a garnish and you have an original Old Fashion. Today a cocktail is more loosely defined as any mixed (alcoholic) drink. Embury [5] gives a rather nice definition of a cocktail as (1) a base, (2) a modifier, and optionally (3) a flavoring or coloring agent. Almost all cocktails can be placed into this definition provided one allows the occasional indulgence of multiple bases, modifiers and coloring agents! While this

As [11] points out early in *The Joy of Mixology*, with cocktail and mixing, there are no rules. Similarly, trying to categorize mixed drinks into common, accepted taxonomy is fraught and ripe for ontological debate. I'm fairly agnostic about what makes a Fizz and not a Collins, but I'll try and outline a simple taxonomy below, highlighting disagreements when appropriate. I think it's fair to say that there are two main camps: the one taken, for example, by Clarke [3] that separates sours from highballs based on the addition of non-alcoholic carbonation, and the one taken, for example, by Regan [11] which links sours to fizzes and collinses based on the principle, non-carbonating ingredients.

Sours A sour is spirit, sour, sugar and water. The sugar and water may be simple syrup or a liqueur of some sort. Regan [11], for example likes to partition sours into *regular*, *international*, and *New Orleans* where the first uses a non-alcoholic sweetener, the second uses a liqueur and the third uses an orange liqueur.

Highballs As with Clarke [3], we'll say a high ball is any drink that involves a non-alcoholic form of carbonation be it tonic water, soda water, ginger beer, or Coca-Cola. For example, topping two ounces of em Dark 'n' Stormy [5] does not want to be so inclusive, defining a highball as "any tall iced drink (6 ounces or more) consisting of a base liquid (alcoholic or non-alcoholic) in combination with a carbonated beverage and with or without auxiliary coloring and flavoring agents, but definitely *without* lemon or lime juice."

- Fizz: A sour, shaken with ice, but served in a tall glass without ice and topped with soda water (i.e. the fizz).
- Collins: A lemon sour, built and served in a tall glass with ice, topped with soda water, and stirred. The glass is usually taller than the one used in a Fizz.
- Rickey: A Collins but with lime instead of lemon.
- Buck: A Collins, but with ginger ale (and no other sweetening agent since the ginger ale is already sweet).

Daises, Fixes, Smashes, and Juleps An original daisy was a sour, served with shaved ice and a few dashes of orange cordial (think of the brandy-based Grand Marnier here) [13]. Later the orange cordial became grenadine. Fixes are daises with lots of fresh fruit. They're "fixed-up." Juleps use muddled mint and omit the sour. Think mint muddled in syrup surrounded by ice and high-proof spirit. Smashes are the diminutive of juleps (see Wondrich [13] page 158).

Aromatic Cocktails As does Embury [5], I like to group the Martini and the Manhattan and the Whiskey Cocktail into a single category called *Aromatic Cocktails* since they are defined, loosely, as containing aromatics either in the form of aromatic vines, or aromatic or digestive bitters. Regan [11] and others make distinctions between spirit-forward cocktails (the modifier is vermouth or some other fortified wine), ancestrals (base spirit + sugar) and duos and trios (where the modifier plays a large role).

3 Tools and Technique

Embury [5], Meehan and Gall [9], Regan [11], Wondrich [13] and many other authors have fine sections on the proper tools of the mixing and tending trade so I won't go into details here. But to mention a few: *jiggers*, *mixing glasses*, *boston shakers*, *julep strainers*, *hawthorne strainers*, *bar spoons*, *muddlers*, *lewis bags* and *mallets*. Most of

the authors also have apt descriptions of how to employ the tools too. It's very easy to effectively mix—all it takes is a few demonstrates and some practice.

One note on jiggers: I started using the traditional two-sided jiggers and have since switched to the single angled OXO jigger which offers convenience (except for the lack of the 3/4 oz. mark) and a simple, clean pour.

4 Bourbon

By law in the United States [1], all whiskey must be

- made from a grain mash;
- distilled at less than 190 proof;
- possess the taste, aroma, and characteristics generally attributed to whiskey;
- stored in oak containers (except that corn whisky need not be so stored); and
- bottled at not less than 80 proof,

Additionally, the grain mash of bourbon must be at least 51% corn. Additionally, the distillate cannot exceed 160 proof (interestingly, any spirit distilled over 190 proof is classified as a grain neutral spirit—vodka is GNS cut with water) but it must be bottled at no less than 80 proof. Between distillation and bottling, the spirit must be aged in a new, charred oak barrel at no more than 125 proof. *Straight bourbon* must be aged for at least 2 years. Any straight bourbon aged up to 4 years must give its age on the bottle [1]. Note that Bourbon does *not* need to come from Kentucky.

Here are some noted bourbon distilleries:

Buffalo Trace (Sazerac Co.), Frankfort, KY

Buffalo Trace makes many bourbons including:

- Blanton's
- Buffalo Trace
- Eagle Rare
- George T. Stagg
- Van Winkle and Pappy Van Winkle Bourbon
- W.L. Weller

Sazerac company recently acquired Barton 1792 Distillery in Bardstown, KY which makes many bourbons including Ten High and 1792 Ridgemont Reserve.

Wild Turkey (Campari Group), Lawrenceburg, KY

From [12]:

Wild Turkey (Campari Group), Lawrenceburg, KY. Drinks giant Pernod Ricard recently sold this venerable brand to Italy's Campari. Most of the Bourbons and rye whiskeys made at this Lawrenceburg distillery carry the Wild Turkey name, though they have recently begun to market Russell's Reserve as a separate brand.

Heaven Hill, Bardstown, KY

From [12]:

The last family owned distillery in Kentucky, Bardstown based Heaven Hill's diverse brand portfolio includes Bourbon, rye, Kentucky's only straight wheat whiskey and nearly all of the (non micro) American corn whiskey brands. To make it more confusing. Prior to 2010, Heaven Hill's rye whiskeys were distilled at the Brown Forman Shively distillery.

Elijah Craig is distilled and aged by Heaven Hill.

4.0.1 Four Roses (Kirin), Lawrencburg, KY

From [12]:

Four Roses only recently began bringing their Bourbon back to the US. Aside from the Four Roses label, the distillery makes Bulleit Bourbon for Diageo.

See also:

<http://chuckcowdery.blogspot.com/2011/08/coming-soon-bulleit-experience-at.html> for more information.

In general, alcohol has become big business, with serious conglomerations. For example, Diageo, has over 60 associated brands from Ketel One Vodka, to Guinness, to Bulleit Bourbon to Jose Cuervo. For a complete list check out their website:

<http://www.diageo.com/en-row/ourbrands/Pages/StrategicBrands.aspx>

5 Sours

The following sours all use the same 8:3:3 proportion of spirit to sour to sweet in their recipes. This is the standard used by Meehan and Gall [9] of New York's PDT, but this proportion is not fixed. You'll find recommendations ranging from 8:2:1 [5] (very sour, very spirit-forward) to 1:1:1 in the case of an original sidecar [8]. Here are six sour recipes. The focus here is on proportion and not history (we'll cover the history of rum, brandy, tequila, pisco, and gin later).

Whiskey Sour

- 2 oz. bourbon
- 3/4 oz. lemon juice
- 3/4 oz. simple syrup

Shake and strain into a well-chilled coupe. Notes: bitters on the top are optional (see Embury [5]), sometimes served on the rocks with garnish (see Regan [11]) and historically sometimes served with a dash of curacao or a claret (red wine) float (see Wondrich [13]).

Daiquiri

- 2 oz. white rum
- 3/4 oz. lemon juice
- 3/4 oz. simple syrup

Shake and strain into a well-chilled coupe. Lime garnish is optional. Notes: perhaps the original sour, sailors, in hopes of preventing scurvy ate limes, but they went bad, so rum was added to the juice as a preservative. Frozen daiquiris can be delicious, but they should be drunk (I believe) poolside only.

Side car

- 2 oz. brandy
- 3/4 oz. lemon juice
- 3/4 oz. Cointreau

Shake and strain into a well-chilled coupe. Lemon twist optional. Notes: Meehan and Gall [9] serve this with an additional 1/4 oz. of simple syrup (perhaps to add a touch more sweetness against the Remy Martin VSOP cognac called for in their recipe). Adjusting to the *terroir* of the base spirit (*i.e.*, the characteristics of the geography, land and climate of the region) is becoming more common among bartenders and mixologists.

Margarita

- 2 oz. tequila blanco (unaged)
- 3/4 oz. lime juice
- 3/4 oz. Cointreau

Shake and strain into a well-chilled coupe. Lime wheel. Notes: Meehan and Gall [9] serve this with an additional 1/4 oz. of agave syrup (again, my guess is to balance out the El Tesoro Platinum called for in their recipe, but it might also be to offset the sour with a bit more sweet without adding the orange spice of the Cointreau).

Pisco Sour

- 2 oz. pisco
- 3/4 oz. lime juice
- 3/4 oz. simple syrup
- 1 egg white

Dry shake, the shake and double strain into a well-chilled coupe. 4-5 drops of Amargo or Angostura bitters on the top, cut into hearts with a knife.

Aviation

- 2 oz. gin
- 3/4 oz. lemon juice
- 1/2 oz. Maraschino liqueur
- 1/4 oz. Creme de Violette

Shake and strain into a well-chilled coupe. This drink is experiencing a resurgence since (perhaps) Rothman and Winter's Creme de Violette hit the U.S. market. Craddock [4] and Regan [11] don't include the Creme de Violette, but Ensslin [6], which predates both, does.

References

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