

Bowled Over!

This season, DC's top bartenders get punch drunk

| By Kelly A. Magyarics | Photography by Powers and Crewe |

The rules of recession chic dictate that simplicity trumps extravagance—so long as style and substance hold court. Behind the bar, punch is the great equalizer, a communal concoction without costly ingredients or laborious preparations. Traditionally, punch has five ingredients: spirits, citrus, sugar, water and spice, and the drink's name is thought to hail from the Hindi word for five—*panch*. “Punch is basically a sour cocktail that's been spiced and extended with something nonalcoholic like water or tea,” explains Phil Greene of the Museum of the American Cocktail. DC-area mixologists are dusting off and filling punch sets with old-timey recipes and modern twists of this stylishly garnished sipper. In tough times like these, punch is indisputably indispensable. Ladle it up!



Cork's spicy swill.

THE DRINK



The Tabard Inn's tasty tease.



Jackson 20's knockout punch.

RUM PUNCH

THE INSPIRATION: While touring the easy-breezy East Indies, bar manager Tom Brown found himself sipping bartenders' distinctive takes on rum-based punch. He declared them all scrumptious and scrambled home to experiment with his own. **THE DETAILS:** Brown mixes Ron Rico white and Cruzan Black Strap dark rums, John D. Taylor's Velvet Falernum, Domaine de Canton ginger liqueur, orange juice and his trade-wind trade secret: house-made spiced lemonade with anise, cinnamon and other hush-hush ingredients. “The citrus shines through until mid palate, where the spices start to kick.” \$9. **WHERE TO FIND IT:** *Cork*, 1720 14th St., NW, 202.265.2675.

MISSISSIPPI PUNCH

THE INSPIRATION: Justin Guthrie whipped out his copy of Jerry Thomas's 1862 beverage bible *How to Mix Drinks* to prove that what's old is new again. “A punch is defined by the people sitting around the bowl,” the bartender waxes. “It brings people together not for it—but what becomes as a result of it.” **THE DETAILS:** This potent potable is sold by the bowlful, with floating fruit-filled ice blocks and punch cups for all. The swill thwacks with a hefty dose of brandy, rye whiskey, and Pusser's aged rum—an Old World rum considered the truffle of the spirit world—balanced by tart lemon juice, tannic tea and sugar. \$40 a bowl. **WHERE TO FIND IT:** *Blue Ridge*, 2340 Wisconsin Ave., NW, 202.333.4004.

ROMAN PUNCH

THE INSPIRATION: Mixology mistress Chantal Tseng steals a page from the entertaining handbook of teetotaling President Rutherford B. Hayes's administration—a time when this clandestinely spirited concoction was masked as a fruit cooler for guests stealthily imbibing at White House functions. Fortunately, at the Tabard Inn, stylish consumption is always welcome. Bottoms up! **THE DETAILS:** Tseng combines brandy, Appleton Jamaican rum, Cointreau and Luxardo Maraschino Liqueur with orange and lemon juice and a spritz of sparkling water, served off with an assortment of fresh fruit. \$10. **WHERE TO FIND IT:** *Tabard Inn*, 1739 N St., NW, 202.331.8528.

OLD DELAWARE FISHING PUNCH

THE INSPIRATION: Long ago, this well-fortified thirst quencher was made for fishermen to knock back during long expeditions. At Redwood, fans of Derek Brown's and Jared Rager's version run the gamut from light-rum drinkers to Manhattan devotees; even those who eschew cocktails become converts. “A great punch will keep you going back to the bowl,” says Brown. **THE DETAILS:** Dogfish Head's Brown Honey Rum gives the drink a rich honey, almost chocolaty sweetness, rounded out with St. Rémy Brandy, lemon, lime and orange juices and simple syrup. \$9 for one; \$32 for a pitcher that serves four. **WHERE TO FIND IT:** *Redwood*, 7121 Bethesda Lane, Bethesda, 301.656.5155.

PRESIDENTIAL PUNCH

THE INSPIRATION: Quick-witted White House staffers dragged buckets of this swill out to the lawn to attract the unruly crowd celebrating Andrew Jackson's inauguration. Jackson 20's Marcus Garner whipped up his variation to honor Obama's swearing-in. **THE DETAILS:** Leblon cachaça, peach schnapps, sparkling cider and house-made lemon-ginger syrup create “a sturdy combination of sweet and sour, with sparkling effervescence,” says Garner. The punch is dispensed from a glass vessel filled with Granny Smith apples, bourbon-soaked peaches and pineapple rings; an optional cabernet floater adds color and kick. \$9. **WHERE TO FIND IT:** *Jackson 20*, 480 King St., Alexandria, 703.842.2790. ■