



SPIRIT|Realm

Exploring trends in cocktails, spirits and the stars behind the bar.

CHILL OUT

Portable ice machines keep cocktailing stress-free.

We've all been there. Ten minutes until the guests arrive, and you don't have enough ice for the evening. No time for trays or making an ice run when the doorbell is about to ring. What to do? Keep your martinis cool and yourself collected with a portable icemaker. These workhorse appliances look sleek, and produce their first batch of ice in minutes. No plumbing is needed—just plug them in and add water—so they are also great for boating or tailgating. The **Sunpentown IM-1015 Portable Ice Maker** (\$209, amazon.com) produces 12 cubes in one of three sizes every 10 minutes, and stores over two pounds of it. For the coldest, rock-hard cubes for chilling cocktails, remove each finished batch and transfer to a freezer.

—KELLY MAGYARICS



BRITISH INVASION

Tea cocktails are the new toast of the spirits world.

High tea meets happy hour with these English-inspired, tea-based tipples—and you don't have to hop the pond to find them.

At newly opened Rabbit in the Moon (New York, N.Y., 212.473.2800), an English lodge-inspired townhouse located in Manhattan's West Village, imbibers can sip Earl Grey tea-infused martinis and snack on shepherd's pie.

At Hatfield's in Los Angeles, Calif., the "Uncle Jerry's Log Cabin" cocktail mixes Earl Grey-infused rye and maple syrup—along with a splash of lemon—to refreshing effect. hatfieldsrestaurant.com

Rum punch gets a restorative twist with the addition of Earl Grey tea at the sleek, marble-topped seafood bar,



Oceana, near Rockefeller Center in New York, N.Y. livanosrestaurantgroup.com

A flavorful blend of red fruit tea, four liquors and a splash of soda form the "LCIT", (short for La Cienega Iced Tea), reviving Angelenos at the upscale Tres

by José Andrés restaurant at the SLS Hotel in Beverly Hills. slshotels.com

The "High Tea" cocktail at Tableu and B Bar inside the Wynn Las Vegas combines the limited-release Absolut Boston vodka (infused with black tea and elderflower) with thinly sliced long English cucumbers and rose nectar (pictured left). wyynnlasvegas.com

Partygoers at mur.mur in Atlantic City's Borgata Hotel pep up with the "Oranje Eclipse" cocktail, made with Ketel One Oranje vodka, Jasmin Pearl Blossom green tea, St. Germain liqueur and lemon juice. theborgata.com

Nob Hill diners sip on the "Red Tea Manhattan" at Masa's Restaurant in San Francisco, made with Woodford Reserve Bourbon infused with red vanilla Bourbon tea, Cointreau and chocolate biters. masasrestaurant.com —A.K.

RUSTIC REFINEMENT

Shochu, Japan's popular distilled spirit, makes for a refreshing summer sip

Much is lost in translation when shochu, Japan's native distilled spirit, is introduced simply as Japanese vodka.

Unlike cheap, mass-produced shochu, honkaku shochu, translated literally as "real shochu," is the traditionally crafted, single-distilled shochu that has exploded in popularity in Japan over the last decade. Vodka is prized for its neutrality, but honkaku shochu puts a bold spotlight on the humblest of raw materials—usually sweet potatoes, barley, buckwheat or rice, but also ingredients like sesame or chestnuts. It's hard to imagine a vodka beloved for its pro-

found potatoey character, but the earthy complexity drawn out from rustic ingredients is exactly what makes premium honkaku shochu so delightful.

Beniotome Goma Shochu (Beniotome Shuzo Co., Ltd., Fukuoka), made from a blend of wheat, rice and sesame seeds, is particularly notable. Goma shochu means "sesame shochu," and although its roasted sesame aroma is prominent, it's also mysteriously smoky and complex. Dry, rich and round with a hint of bitterness, it's delicious neat and refreshing on the rocks. beniotome.co.jp

—ANNA LEE C. IJIMA



Tableside Cocktail Service: Back On the Menu Nationwide

Tableside cocktail service used to exist only in swanky restaurants. Now, even casual watering holes put bartenders behind a rolling cart to customize cocktails.

Sunday brunch-goers at **Aja**, inside Dana Hotel in Chicago, can order a Mimosa or a Bloody Mary from a roving cart. ajachicago.com

The Drawing Room in Chicago pours signature cocktails tableside, incorporating ice cubes created using a horizontal evaporator ice-making system. epassage.com

At **Suite & Tender**, inside Setai San Diego, drinks are made tableside, including Painkiller (a British Virgin Islands favorite) and Grace (Cointreau, Champagne and three berries). suiteandtender.com

Going a step above tableside, bartenders at **Fraiche** (Culver City and Santa Monica) prepare cocktails on tabletops with as much attention as they would in plating a course. fraicherestaurantla.com

Vintage carts are mere accessories in the fabulously restored Art Deco-and-chandelier ambience at **The Edison** in Los Angeles, tucked into the basement of the city's first private power plant. Handcrafted cocktails are prepared by waitresses using what's stocked on the cart. edisondowntown.com —KRISTINE HANSEN



COCKTAIL of the Month

HALF-COCKED COCKTAIL

2 ounces Bulleit Bourbon
 ½ ounce strawberry purée
 ¼ ounce fresh orange juice
 1 teaspoon simple syrup
 ¼ ounce Creole Shrub
 orange liqueur
 ½ strawberry (for garnish)
 2–3 grains pink Himalayan
 sea salt

Using a cocktail glass (martini) rinse

the glass with the Creole Shrub
 orange liqueur and set aside.

In a cocktail shaker combine the
 Bourbon, strawberry purée, orange
 juice and simple syrup.

Shake well and strain into the
 prepared glass. Garnish with a thin
 slice of strawberry that has been
 carefully sprinkled with only 2–3
 grains of the sea salt. Float the
 strawberry (salt side up) on top of

the cocktail and serve.

Strawberry Purée recipe:

In a blender combine 1 cup of fresh
 strawberries, 1 ounce of fresh lemon
 juice, 1 tablespoon of granulated
 sugar.

Blend well, taste for sweetness
 and adjust if necessary. Pour into
 clean container. Keep chilled until
 ready to use. Purée will keep for 2–3
 days if refrigerated.



**MIXOLOGIST
 OF THE MONTH**

**Lu
 Brow**

**Bar Chef, Commander's Palace,
 New Orleans**

You can't miss Lu Brow at a cocktail event: just look for the bold lipstick and flaming red hair. Known for her expertise with classic and historic cocktails, Brow is a self-described "bar chef" with the Commander's Palace family of restaurants, training staff and building cocktails. Compared to a bartender, who prepares drinks according to recipe, Brow explains, "a 'bar chef' crafts his or her own recipes and prepares fresh juices and mixers." She describes her cocktail approach as "classic" above all.

Brow is a beloved fixture in the New Orleans cocktail scene, which she says has "come a long way in just a few years since Katrina. Cocktail professionals love New Orleans for its history and culture. It's good to see we now value cocktails in the same way we have valued food forever."

Looking forward, Brow anticipates more savory drinks and more kitchen-inspired cocktails, as bartenders "look at food professionals for guidance and invention." She also notes that more wine lovers who might have shunned spirits in the past are now turning a fresh eye toward cocktails.

She advises home bartenders to equip themselves with a "really good" cocktail book, such as those penned by Dale DeGroff, one of Brow's early mentors. "Read it and study it just as you do your cookbooks from the professionals," she says. "Make yourself knowledgeable about bar tools, shakers and strainers. If you take the same care and consideration for your bar at home that you do with your kitchen, you will be a success."

—KARA NEWMAN

PHOTO LEFT JON VAN GORDER