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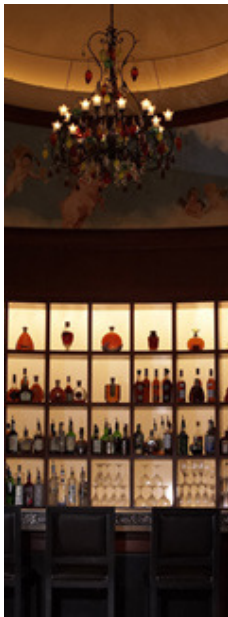


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## Featured Article



Contact Information

### Alcohol

#### Van Gogh Vodka

[www.vangoghvodka.com](http://www.vangoghvodka.com)

#### Three Olives Vodka

[www.threeolives.com](http://www.threeolives.com)

#### Island Oasis:

[www.islandoasis.com](http://www.islandoasis.com)

#### Firefly Vodka

843/559-6867,

[www.fireflyvodka.com](http://www.fireflyvodka.com)

#### 360 Vodka

McCormick Distilling,

<http://vodka360.com>

#### Kubler Absinthe:

[www.kuberabsinthe.com](http://www.kuberabsinthe.com)

#### Lucid Absinthe:

<http://drinklucid.com>

Jagermeister: [www.jager.com](http://www.jager.com)

### Equipment

#### McDantim Trumix gas blender

[www.mcdantim.com](http://www.mcdantim.com)

## Bar Bonanza! The Latest & Greatest in Bar Trends

by *Deborah Brauser*

Today's bars run the gamut from fun and dynamic nightclubs to the increasingly popular high-quality, low-stress lounges that make a big statement. Within this varied arena, talented bartenders and even certified mixologists are experimenting with innovative drink combinations, the freshest ingredients, the latest flavors and even healthful and "green" alternatives. Most cocktails seem to fall into one of two categories: sweet and fun, or traditional classics—usually served with top shelf premium brands.

### Pour Me Another ...

An explosion of flavored vodkas is now available, such as mango, Dutch chocolate and acai-blueberry by Van Gogh Vodka, and root beer, triple shot espresso and even tomato from Three Olives Vodka. In South Carolina, the current rage is Firefly Sweet Tea Vodka from the Firefly Distillery, located 30 miles south of Charleston. Though it's currently distributed in just a few states, the company hopes to roll into more areas soon, especially in the Southeast. "We're a company based in the South, and everyone in the South loves sweet tea," explains co-owner Jim Irvin. Ryan Groeschel, general manager and sommelier at Phases Moon Bar in Orangeburg, S.C., agrees, "We used to infuse our vodkas with tea anyway, but once Firefly came out, people started asking for it constantly. People are always looking for new, fun drinks that have bright colors and cool, unusual names."

Cosmopolitans are prevalent once again, due in large part to the Sex and the City movie and its cosmo-loving leading ladies. And martinis of all types are still popular. The very small (and aptly named) Tini Martini Bar, tucked inside the historic Casablanca Inn of St. Augustine, Fla., offers 58 different vodkas and at least 20 to 25 martinis on its menu. "In addition to our flavored vodka, we're also seeing a return to the old-fashioned, traditional straight vodka or gin martinis, especially from younger patrons," says senior staff member, Jason Morgan.

Rum is still big, especially in Florida and especially in mojitos—the bane of bartenders everywhere due to its labor-intensive mint muddling. (Muddling is a technique in which the bartender crushes ingredients such as herbs or fruits to extract more of their flavor.) "Send out one, and it'll turn into 11 every time," says Morgan. "The fresh mint and the presentation get the customers every time."

XO Bar in the InterContinental Buckhead Atlanta hotel is using more fresh fruits and vegetables in its drinks, especially a peach flavored ... anything. "Here in Georgia, that's a given. Especially in our fresh Peach Taquini," says Josep Juncosa, the bar's director of food and beverage. "Our bartenders are like chefs now, with prep work ahead of time to make sure they're ready to provide all sorts of options."

"Absinthe Returns to America" was an especially well-attended seminar at this summer's Tales of the Cocktail event in New Orleans. Since becoming legalized last year, this spirit has been drawing in customers with its dark liquid and mysterious past. Lucid Absinthe and Kubler Swiss Absinthe are particularly fashionable, as are the

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attractive glass fountains both companies sell for dispensing cold water to dilute the absinthe.

**Back to the Classics**

XO, which was named for Hennessy eXtra Old, offers 85 varieties of cognac, including several vintage bottles ranging from \$1,000 to \$6,000 each—as well as locker rentals for safe storage. “Today’s generation is more educated, and they’re demanding more,” says Juncosa.

Phases’ Groeschel adds, “Our customers want good, clean flavors with Grey Goose and Bombay Sapphire among our best sellers. And they’re asked for by name.” In addition, he says that customers know exactly how much of each ingredient they want, especially when they order health-conscious or lower calorie versions of trendy drinks.

**Healthful & Green Drinks**

Organic combinations, many of which include fresh juices and acai, are picking up steam, as are all things pomegranate—thanks in large part to Oprah’s raves about its great taste and healthful antioxidant qualities. “Pomegranate is like the cranberry craze from a few years ago,” says Juncosa. “We’re always looking for the healthiest drink combinations with green tea and spices such as ginger.”

Describing itself as “vodka with a green state of mind,” the hugely popular 360 Vodka comes in a bottle made from 85 percent recycled glass, and donates one dollar to various environmental causes for every closure sent back to the company. “Our employees inspired us to become a more environmentally responsible company,” says Vic Morrison, marketing vice president for McCormick Distilling. “We’re thrilled that 360 Vodka gets noticed because it’s eco-friendly. But consumers are also recognizing it for being a top shelf premium brand.”

**Ice, Ice Baby**

With the continued popularity of frozen drinks such as pina coladas and margaritas, and what it calls “a return to basic flavors such as strawberry and banana,” Island Oasis has launched its successful “Flavor of the Month” club. VP of Marketing Barry Boehme says, “This program lets us freshen up our clients’ menus while providing core flavors that can then be used in new and interesting ways.” The company plans to offer a new frozen mojito mix soon. “No muddling required,” laughs Boehme. “Just mix and add a sprig of mint and you’re done!”

Other really cool ice trends include decorative ice cubes, such as those infused with strawberry or espresso essence at Phases, an increase in ice carving decorations, such as event centerpieces and hollowed-out luges that are then filled with alcohol, and two new ice bars.

The Infuzion Ice Lounge opened in Richmond, Va., early this year and features a bar, walls, tables and decorative columns all made of ice. Here, customers pay \$15 for a 30-minute visit where they don parkas and gloves, sample vodka out of ice glasses and get a framed photo of the experience. ICEBAR Orlando recently celebrated the opening of its 1,000 sq. ft. solid ice bar. Owners of both places came up with their concepts after visiting these types of attention-grabbing venues overseas.

**Decor**

Some of the hottest trends in décor right now include relaxing groupings of comfortable chairs and sofas; dramatic bar areas; cutting-edge sound systems; cool yet cost-effective lighting; and letting the outside in with rooftop, poolside and inside/outside spaces.

Phases features an alabaster under-lit LED bar as well as sustainable cork flooring, ergonomically designed rubber matting and changeable LED lighting from Production Design Associates (PDA) of Charleston, S.C. “We chose them because they have so much experience in event lighting. And we wanted preprogrammable light displays that slowly transition to different colors,” says Groeschel. “It’s subtle but adds to the mood.”

PDA Sales Manager Anthony Constantine says that LED lighting is becoming a much more viable option. "Prices are dropping, which gives us more flexibility in giving our clients a higher quality product that lasts longer."

Jay Cullimore, president of Tropical Lights Inc. of Fort Lauderdale, agrees that combining cool design with a green sensibility is easier than ever. Tropical Lights specializes in manufacturing and selling high-end green lighting for the hospitality industry through its six companies, including RestaurantLights.com. "You can do more now with the technology," says Cullimore. "Just because they're energy efficient doesn't mean they can't be great designs. Color changing LED is huge, as is wall washing and texturing in nightclubs, and LED candles and lamps in lounges. And it's all eco-friendly!"

#### **Equipment**

For establishments offering wine by the glass, the Enomatic Wine Serving Systems provide several innovative features: a preservation technology that uses nitrogen or argon gas to prevent oxidation once a bottle is opened, computer programming to control pour volume and even wine card activation—letting customers serve themselves by using preprogrammed, reusable smart cards.

Striving to provide the best beer possible, Phases uses a ventable keg system from Pacific Beer Equipment to eliminate foam and a McDantim Trumix gas blender that mixes nitrogen and CO<sub>2</sub>. Plus, the glycol from its Glastender dispensing system chills the beer lines from the kegs to the taps at a constant 30 degrees.

Taking advantage of the whole inside/outside craze, Potions in Motion of Florida is now selling its customizable and backlit portable Blast Bar. Made of lightweight aluminum, each bar is fully operational in under a minute and folds down to just 5" for easy storage. The company has been selling to country clubs, hotels and lounges that want to easily set up a branded, fully working bar area for special events and promos, or for exterior use—especially poolside.

#### **Events**

Interactivity is the name of the game for some of the most successful events around the country: hands-on mixology lessons at the Ritz-Carlton Amelia Island's Salt Lounge, a weekly "Build Your Own Bloody Mary" bar at Maryjane's Coffeeshop inside the Hard Rock Hotel San Diego and a Sunday morning "Jazz in Your Jammies" brunch at the Dragonfly at Hotel ZaZa in Dallas—where pajama-clad diners are invited to enjoy French-Creole cuisine and live jazz. And Jagermeister is currently promoting Guitar Hero contests and parties all over the country. "Jagermeister and the Jager Bomb are by far some of the hottest shots in the country," says Sarah Zeiler of Sidney Frank Importing. "We've got a lot of great on-premise promotions in place."

Whether it's upscale with a twist or modern with a deep appreciation for the classics, today's customers know what they want and appreciate a bar that provides it in a creative way. "When I worked in Miami, I don't think a cognac bar would have been as popular," says XO's Juncosa. "You have to do what works best for your surroundings. Overall, we just have to be flexible to our clients' demands."