



Raising the Bar



FOODSERVICE *news*
The Industry's National Newspaper



Proudly Presents:



THE SEMI-ANNUAL BEVERAGE MENU MAKE-OVER CONTEST

One lucky restaurant will win 2 days of hands on staff and management training by master mixologist and renowned flair bartender Gavin MacMillan, focusing on:

- accuracy
- speed
- flair
- cocktail synergy
- time management behind the bar
- review of current menu and full menu makeover.

Here's what to do: Complete the ballot below (one entry per establishment). Mail/or fax your ballot to the coordinates listed below. We'll take care of the rest. Gavin will visit your restaurant to help your staff 'Raise the Bar.'

Name: _____

Establishment: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

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Cool as a Cucumber

Walk into almost any hip Toronto, Vancouver or Montreal restaurant and the cocktail menu you're handed will likely describe mouth-watering concoctions that use fresh herbs, organic fruit and other top-notch ingredients.

Using cucumber in a cocktail may sound ridiculous at first. Until recently, only a few bartenders would even consider using cucumber as a garnish on a Bloody Caesar or Mary, but all of that is about to change. Cucumbers have somehow made the transition from a low-cost garnish to a top-shelf ingredient – bar chefs have embraced cucumbers as a hot, or cool, new addition to menus, along with a host of other ingredients that are making the migration from the kitchen to the bar.

Although signature cocktails are being whipped up in other big cities like New York and Los Angeles, Toronto's gastronomic culture has inspired bartenders to raise the bar and take their cues from the kitchen. Bartenders are becoming known as "bar chefs" as they search for fresh ingredients, visit farmers' markets, source artisanal spirits, and size up the competition in other cities.

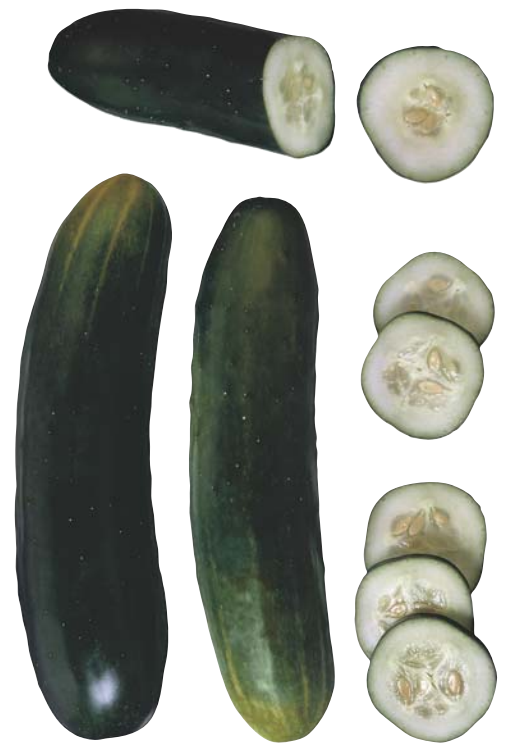
Most restaurants today aim to provide no less than the best when it comes to the food produced in the kitchen. Fresh vegetables make the best salads, and with a push towards healthy eating, many of our guests are opting for the healthier side salad versus fries or a baked potato. When we prepare drinks on the bar or food in the kitchen there should be more than a few similarities in our method. It seems more than a little ironic that we will accept nothing less than the best on the culinary front, and accept just about anything when it comes to the bar.

New York's "King of Cocktails," Dale DeGross, head bartender of The Rainbow Room, is credited with reviving upscale specialty cocktails, having invented some 400 cocktails with fresh juice and no mixes. He emphasizes the importance of approaching a bar the way a chef approaches his/her kitchen. He believes that cocktails, like food, are about ingredients.

Classic cocktails such as manhattans, martinis and sidecars are on the rise at white-tablecloth restaurants in Toronto, Los Angeles, Chicago and New York, he says, adding, "People are taking the classics and being more creative with them with their own twist, maybe fresh fruit or seasonal herbs."

Increasingly, chefs are working with mixologists to create new and interesting drinks that contain ingredients not previously found in cocktails. Cucumbers have been a great addition to the cocktail list – they are not sweet, but lend a very refreshing taste.

Many restaurant patrons will have a cocktail to start the meal, and then move on to wine



with the meal. The challenge is to create a cocktail that is good enough to prompt the order of a second round before the bottle of wine hits the table. Quite often it's a little more than the smell of freshly muddled mint that prompts a run on mojitos. Working in an industry where the up sell is fundamentally important to profitability, fresh seasonal cocktails that sell themselves are worth their weight in gold. Until next time, keep 'raising the bar' in your establishment, because if you don't, someone else will.

Cocktail of the Month Cool as a Cucumber

- 1 oz. Bacardi Big Apple Rum
- 1 oz. melon liqueur
- 1/2 oz. simple syrup or 1/2 teaspoon granulated sugar
- 2 oz. cucumber puree

Combine ingredients in a cocktail shaker and shake vigorously over ice. Garnish with a slice or spear of cucumber and a fresh squeeze of lime juice.



Gavin MacMillan is a master mixologist and bar chef, and owns BartenderOne Corp., Canada's fastest growing group of bartender training facilities. He is an award-winning flair bartender and published author and is considered one of Canada's leading authorities on cocktails and mixology. You can reach him at gavin@bartenderone.com.