



Raising the Bar

Asian Inspired Ingredient Adds Zen to the Green-teani

There's no doubt that the Far East has heavily influenced our health conscious way of thinking in North America. There's something exotic about thousands of years of tradition and total body health that the Asian philosophy offers. From Tai Chi and Chai Teas (say that 5 times fast) to fresh ginger root, echinacea and other holistic and alternative remedies, we're embracing eastern culture in both Canada and the United States like never before. Dr. Andrew Romanelli of the Sports Performance Centres says 75 per cent of his patients are looking to acupuncture as an alternative and less invasive form of treatment. What does this have to do with cocktail culture you ask? How about this for alternative medicine...

In recent months, many spirit and liqueur manufacturers have taken notice of the trend and the cocktail marketplace is now starting to see new and exciting Asian inspired creations. Although some may consider it a stretch to believe that drinking a martini could be a health conscious decision, having yourself a Green-teani will certainly offer you more healthy benefits than your average rye and coke. Consider that green tea offers tremendous amounts of antioxidants, which have both anti-aging properties and aid in the prevention of disease.

Canadian spirit manufacturer Corby's recently raised the bar with the introduction of their new brightly coloured and exotic tasting Euphoria line of liqueurs. Asian pear, gink guava and pomegranate have become popular martini flavours. According to Daniel Lundberg, Corby's senior brand manager, these products are opening new markets for them.

Corby's isn't alone. Trailblazers like Miles Karakeševic, of the Californian Micro-distillery Charbay, recently launched green tea infused vodka to add to the growing list of vodka infusions now available. Karakeševic's Green Tea Vodka is flavoured with the extractions of four Chinese green tea varieties; all blended in a style similar to the way perfume is created.

Suntory International and Allied Domecq Spirits introduced ZEN Green Tea Liqueur to the U.S. market in 2005. It is a blend of the finest Japanese green tea leaves, premium herbs and natural flavours. Meldea Green Tea Liqueur was released by PMA, and is a good cocktail mixer which doubles as an alternative aperitif. It seems like there are no shortage of followers as spirit manufacturers align themselves to keep on top of the latest trends.

Barristas have long known the popularity of teas. After water, tea is the second most widely consumed beverage on the planet. Despite the popularity of teas elsewhere, the North American obsession with coffee has left little room in the marketplace for exclusive tea houses, however, most upscale coffee houses will offer a wide range of teas. Starbucks has found great success with their Chai Teas and Tazo® Green Iced Tea – a blend of Chinese green tea lightly sweetened and shaken with ice.

With all of these options available it's hard to know how to create a great drink that will balance the dry taste of tea with spirit or liqueur while exciting your guests and satisfying their discerning palates. Although the basics of cocktail synergy suggest that a bartender balances sweet and sour when creating a custom cocktail, in this case, we're balancing sweet and dry. Teas will produce a similar dry feel on your tongue to that of a red wine that's high in tannins. While you may find it difficult to get your hands on some of these spirits and liqueurs north of the border, Mixology Canada Inc. has come up with a non-alcoholic bar friendly solution in the form of Tea Fuzions - a line of unsweetened tea concentrates including green tea, earl grey, orange pekoe, chai and matcha.

Scott Megit, president, Mixology Canada Inc., says the line of tea concentrates were custom blended to allow the tea to be mixed with alcohol. They were created in recognition of a huge resurgence in teas as a cocktail or smoothie base in restaurants, cafés and martini bars.

While I don't recommend you rely on the anti-aging properties of the Green-teani as your personal fountain of youth, it does make for a tasty beverage, which will appeal to an increasingly curious consumer base. Keep your eyes open for new trends from the Far East... next month I'll be writing about matcha, a new trend that the food and beverage industry will undoubtedly be eating (and drinking) up in no time!

Until next issue, keep "Raising the Bar" in your place of business because if you don't, someone else will!



Ingredients:

Ice

1 ounce Tea Fuzions
Green Tea concentrate

2 ounces Absolut Mandrin Vodka

1/2 ounce Grand Marnier

1/2 ounce 1883 Cane Sugar simple
syrup

Orange twist

Method: Add Absolut Mandrin Vodka, Grand Marnier, Tea Fuzions Green Tea Concentrate and simple syrup to a cocktail shaker. (If you like a dryer martini, reduce the amount of simple syrup. Try starting with 1/4oz of simple syrup and sweeten to taste.) Shake vigorously 4-5 times to insure that the cocktail is properly mixed and chilled. Strain into a chilled martini glass and garnish with an orange twist.



Gavin MacMillan is currently Canada's Top Ranked Flair Bartender. He trains, competes and performs all over the world and operates Canada's Premier Hospitality Training Facility, BartenderOne. You can reach him at gavin@bartenderone.com.