



Raising the Bar

Exotic Flavours of Summer

How often have you sat with a group of friends in search of something new and exciting and ended up settling on the same old? How often have you asked your resident bartender for a suggestion and been given something truly different? With the arrival of summer patio season more and more people will be looking for a great patio to enjoy the sunshine and a cool cocktail with friends. There are more than a handful of options when it comes to the flavours, that will undoubtedly, dominate this summer's exotic cocktail trends.

As the Canadian consumer continues to demand more than just beer, bartenders are becoming mixologists, and in many cases, bar chefs – taking traditional culinary techniques and implementing them into their beverage programs. In a marketplace dominated by drinks that adhere to specific cost and speed of preparation margins, taking an extra few seconds and spending an extra few cents to handcraft a cocktail using top shelf ingredients can make the difference between clientele that will come back and customers who will keep searching for that elusive “something different.”

When you consider the traditional culinary principles of balancing flavour elements in a dish, you find that the same rules apply to creating custom cocktails. Sweet and sour elements can be balanced along with bitter and spicy. These elements don't always have to be represented by ingredients of the drink itself, but can include dustings of fresh spices (nutmeg or cinnamon) custom rimmers, creative garnish or bitters.

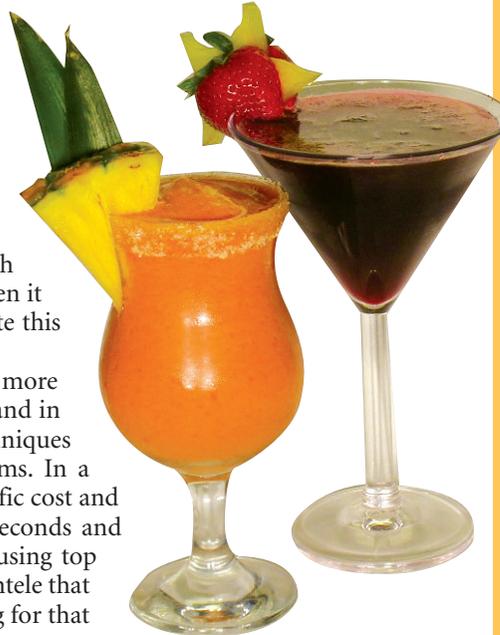
So here's the test. Watch your guests while they look over your cocktail menu. If they're looking at the cocktail menu in the first place, it tells you that they are looking for inspiration. If your cocktail menu doesn't inspire your clientele, and they end up ordering a beer or a rum and coke, perhaps you should look at adding some of the following flavours to your repertoire. Here are a few ways you could implement some exotic flavour combinations for an exciting new weekly special or a summer signature cocktail.

First of all, if you don't have a pomegranate martini on your menu, now is the time! It's deep purple colour and aromatic qualities will make it a surefire hit! By balancing the tartness of pomegranate with the sweet orange flavour of Cointreau, your guests can order these drinks all night. Pomegranate juice is commercially available or if you want to take the extra step and add fresh pomegranate juice, the fruit can be juiced, like an orange, in any conventional juicer. You can reasonably expect each pomegranate to yield 4 oz. of fresh juice.

This month's blended treat is called “A Passionate Man.” As you laugh at the cliché remember that naming and presentation can have a profound impact on the decision making process.

Passion fruit and mango are a natural pairing. The natural sweetness of mango is balanced by the tart qualities of passion fruit. Add a splash of cranberry juice (tart) and you've got a nicely balanced cocktail. For a spicy kick that will really set this cocktail apart, rim your chilled glass with habanero infused sugar to warm the taste buds at first but then cools them off with the tropical fruit flavours. To make the infused sugar rimmer, add 20 drops of habanero tabasco to one cup of granulated white sugar, mix thoroughly and let dry on a plate overnight.

While your guests are sipping on these well-balanced delights, a little bit of entertainment can go a long way towards creating a memorable experience. Using flair can be a great way to involve your guests in the drink making process. As always, the Move of the Month is a flair technique that anyone can do and doesn't risk inventory or margins. This month's move is a Garnish Toss. It may take a little practice, but you'll find that your guests will enjoy it whether it's when you drop the garnish or catch it on the rim of the glass. Until next month, keep Raising the Bar, because if you don't, someone else will!



Move of the Month Garnish on the Rim



Step One

Start with an orange or lemon slice in your left hand and an empty glass in your right hand. Slice or split your garnish so it will sit on the side of the glass.



Step Two

Throw the garnish gently behind your back with the glass ready in your right hand.



Step Three

Catch the garnish on the rim of the glass, prepare your drink and serve. Don't forget to smile!

Original move: Shawn Greco
Bartender pictured: Chris Cooper

To see streaming video of this move and others log onto www.bartenderone.com and click the “move of the month” link.

A Passionate Man

2 oz. Amber Rum
2 oz. Island Originals Passion Fruit Puree
2 oz. Island Originals Mango Puree
Splash of cranberry juice

Blend ingredients with shaved or crushed ice and pour into a chilled hurricane or poco grande glass rimmed with habanero infused sugar.

Pomegranate Martini

1 1/2 oz. Citrus Vodka
1/2 oz. Cointreau
2 oz. Pomegranate juice

Shake ingredients over ice and strain into a chilled martini glass.



Gavin MacMillan was Canada's Top Ranked Flair Bartender in 2005. He trains, competes and performs all over the world and operates Canada's Premier Bartender Training Facility, BartenderOne. You can reach him at gavin@bartenderone.com.