



Raising the Bar



FOODSERVICE *news*
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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: _____

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Molecular Mixology

There has been tremendous buzz in the bartending world for the past few years regarding the term "molecular mixology."

While the name itself can be a little intimidating, molecular mixology can be distilled down into one fundamental distinction. It is simply the process of changing the state of a liquid into a solid or gas.

While the bar and kitchen working together is certainly nothing new, the bar has begun taking cues from culinary predecessors; bartending is making a shift towards incorporating science into cocktails. The latest trend is something being referred to as 'molecular mixology,' the bar equivalent of a molecular approach to gastronomy, which has made leaps and bounds in the kitchen in the past few years.

Molecular gastronomy, pioneered largely thanks to French chemist, Herve This, can loosely be defined as 'showing care with and playing with technique, and changing the vessel that food is prepared in and presented.' In October 2005, Dutch spirit manufacturer Bols commissioned Herve This to present a seminar on molecular mixology to eight of the world's top bartenders in Paris, France. From here, we were given some of the first approaches to incorporating molecular techniques for flavouring or altering the physical properties of cocktails.

Present at the seminar, bartender Eben Freeman of New York City's Tailor is leading the curve, and his drinks are serving as a benchmark to bartenders wishing to jump aboard the molecular bandwagon. Freeman's gin and tonic jelly takes the popular cocktail and, with the addition of gelatin, converts it into half inch cubes served on a candied lime chip. He explains, "If it's presented in a different way, suddenly it's like you're tasting the gin and tonic for the first time." The alteration of texture is quickly becoming one of the most common ways that molecular mixologists are adding shock and awe into their cocktails, and taking new twists on old classics.

Freeman isn't alone, however: Spherification, a technique created by Ferran Adrià of El Bulli Restaurant in Spain, is being used by bartenders to create tiny spheres of flavour to incorporate into a drink. Have you ever heard the phrase 'cocktail caviar' or 'cocktail ravioli'? Here's one of the ways it's done.

To start, your flavour, whether it be a complete cocktail or a juice puree, is mixed with sodium alginate, a gum used to increase the viscosity of the mixture. From here, the mixture is dropped into a calcium chloride and water bath, which gels, or forms a 'skin' on the outside of your mixture. The gel is then rinsed with water, and it's ready to consume. The outside remains firm, but the inside of your

gel remains liquid, providing a burst of flavour when consumed. The smaller of these spheres are referred to as caviar, which they resemble in appearance, and the larger ones are typically referred to as ravioli.

Understandably, the majority of restaurants and bars won't stock calcium chloride or sodium alginate on a regular basis, but British Columbia-based DC DUBY (www.dcduby.com) carries a wide range of products specific to molecular gastronomy and mixology alike.

Another of the more prevalent forms of experimentation behind the bar is the use of flavoured foams, typically used to top a cocktail. By mixing your chosen flavours with sugar and egg whites and then charging with nitrous oxide in a whipped cream canister, you can create a rich, cream-like foam to add another layer of depth to your cocktail. Citrus foams, typically equal parts lemon, lime, and orange, pair very well with many cocktails. Why not try it on your next Cosmopolitan? Making any cider drinks this fall? An apple cinnamon foam will add some incredible flavour to your drink.

Beyond this, we're constantly seeing bartenders pushing the limits of what they can do to keep their cocktails current. From flash freezing with liquid nitrogen to infusing spirits with any variety of flavours, the cocktails emerging are bringing a little bit more importance back to the bar. No matter the extent to which the bartender or establishment experiments with molecular mixology, one thing can be certain: the application of bringing science to the bar leads to a huge influx of knowledge of flavours and preparation techniques. In short, molecular mixology is helping to build better bartenders.

As for the practicality of creating a molecular-focused cocktail menu, the reality is that the amount of preparation, training, and tweaking in making the content consistent can certainly be tiresome.

There are plenty of skeptics as to the lasting power of what's being deemed a 'passing fad' by some, but the twists on new and classic cocktails are helping to showcase the bar as our drinks and bartenders are adoring the rebirth of cocktail culture worldwide.

The bottom line is that broad execution of molecular mixology may not be practical in your bar, but having one drink with a hand-made foam top or caviar sidecar might just create the buzz you've been looking for. What this trend will bring next, no one is quite sure, but so long as there's a thirsty customer, the atomic mixologist has plenty of room to stretch their creativity. Until next time, keep foaming, spherifying, and raising your bar. Cheers.



Nick Nemeth has been behind the wood for just over 5 years, working in venues ranging from fine dining and banquet halls to nightclubs and more. He's developed a passion for mixology and handcrafting cocktails that's helping to raise the bar in Niagara, and today you can find him bartending at Johnny Rocco's Italian Grill and Cantina Charlies Nightclub in Niagara Falls.