



*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: \_\_\_\_\_

5255 Yonge Street Suite 1000, Toronto, Ontario M2N 6P4 Or by fax 416.512.8344



# The Bitter TRUTH

## Elevating customers' taste experiences

I've been bartending for longer than I can remember and, to be honest, it was years before I ever opened a bottle of bitters.

While working in Australia I was introduced to bitters as one of the ingredients in the hangover cure trifecta — lemon, lime and bitters. Made with lemonade (or 7Up to those of us who live in North America), lime cordial and the magic "bitters," this elixir is used to settle the stomach.

By definition, a bitters is an alcoholic beverage similar to a spirit but principally derived from herbs and citrus dissolved in alcohol.

Bitters generally have a bitter or bittersweet flavour profile. They also commonly have an alcoholic strength of up to 45 per cent. But because they are so rich and full of flavour, bitters are normally consumed in small amounts (1/64 of an ounce to 1/32 of an ounce.)

Bitter liqueurs like Jagermeister were originally consumed for their medicinal qualities as much as their intoxicating properties, however, those mentioned here are considered digestif.

There are hundreds of brands of bitters but the worldwide bestseller and most readily available one in Canada is Angostura.

In addition to its original bitters, Angostura has an orange bitters that works well in cosmopolitans, negronis and margaritas as well as most cocktails containing Campari, Cointreau, Grand Marnier, triple sec or blue curacao. Other exceptional orange bitters include Regan's Orange Bitters No. 6, Stirrings' Blood Orange Bitters and Fee Brothers' West Indian Orange Bitters, which also produces grapefruit, peach, lemon and mint-flavoured bitters. And then there's Peychaud's Bitters. While similar to Angostura, Peychaud's has a big, bold red fruit flavour.

Over the years, the widespread use of bitters has dwindled due to the lack of education about this alcoholic liquor and bartender ambition. However, a couple of dashes of



bitters can make an enormous difference in the depth of flavour in your drinks. They are also the best value for money investment a bar can make.

Take a traditional balanced cocktail like the Cuba Libre (rum and coke). Four elements are used to balance this drink and make it a bestseller: rum (strong); ice or water (weak), which balances the strength of the rum; cola (sweet); and lime (sour), which balances the sweetness of the cola.

When balancing a cocktail based on these two axes, (strong versus weak, sweet versus sour), you end up with a drink that hits both sweet and sour taste receptors. Because the Cuba Libre hits two of the four taste sensors on the tongue — the others being salty and bitter — it is given a rank of two.

Then there's the whisky sour, another cocktail classic. This drink has all the makings of a great balanced cocktail. Even though its namesake is 'sour,' the addition of sugar or simple syrup balances this drink and makes it palatable. Most bartenders use rye or bourbon, simple syrup and fresh lime juice to make this cocktail. However, if you look at the classic and sometimes forgotten recipe, it calls for two dashes of Angostura bitters. The addition of bitters to a whisky sour hits sweet, sour and bitter notes on the tongue, giving this drink a rank of three.

Drinks like the margarita naturally hit three of the four taste receptors — sweet (orange liqueur) balanced by sour (lime juice) and salty (salted glass rim). Adding a few dashes of orange bitters can create a cocktail that hits all four taste receptors, providing the drinker with an unparalleled taste experience.

*Gavin MacMillan is a master mixologist, bar chef and owner of BartenderOne Corp., Canada's fastest growing group of bartender training facilities. Gavin is an award-winning flair bartender and published author. He is also considered one of Canada's leading authorities on cocktails and mixology. Contact Gavin at [gavin@bartenderone.com](mailto:gavin@bartenderone.com).*