



As Seen In  
Palm Beach Illustrated  
 May 2011



palate ♦ pour



## HIT AND MIX

The cocktail culture continues.

BY MARK SPIVAK

As we move into the second decade of the new millennium, the cocktail culture is poised to continue its explosive growth. Following are some of the hot trends to watch as they make their way toward South Florida:

**MEZCAL** is made from the maguey plant in the Mexican state of Oaxaca. Loosely related to tequila, mezcal has high alcohol content and a distinctive, smoky quality that makes it a preferred ingredient for cocktails. The mezcal craze came into the mainstream last year with the opening of Mayahuel, an innovative bar in New York's East Village. Mezcal is typically handcrafted in small batches; interesting producers include Benesin, Metl and Sombra. Bottles may be purchased with or without the famous worm.

**BROWN SPIRITS** are coming back, as the country's top mixologists are inventing more and more cocktails based on Cognac and Armagnac. Some of the most popular include the Bloody Passion, Headcrack and D'Artagnan (a Champagne cocktail spiked with Armagnac and Grand Marnier). For sipping, both rum and Kentucky bourbon are enjoying a renaissance.

**CLASSIC COCKTAILS** remain as popular as ever, as consumers relive the golden days before Prohibition. Especially requested are long drinks, such as the Tom Collins, invented in New York in 1876, along with rickeys (a highball containing a base spirit, carbonated water and the juice of half a lime, originally made with bourbon in Washington, D.C.), sours, slings (variations on the Singapore Sling, first concocted at the Long Bar of the Raffles Hotel) and punch of all sorts.

**BITTERS** are the leading weapon in the arsenals of the country's top bartenders.

Many make their own, but the number of artisan bitters on the market has grown exponentially. The most famous are Bittermens (flavors include Xocolatl Mole, Frikula Tiki and Hopped Grapefruit), Bitter End, Bittercube and Bob's Bitters. Bartenders tend to have a soft spot for Angostura and Gary Regan's Orange Bitters is an underground classic. Among potable bitters, Fernet-Branca retains its cult status.

**JAPANESE COCKTAIL TECHNIQUE** continues to fascinate American bartenders, particularly the "hard shake" devised by the legendary Kazuo Uyeda of Tokyo. T



Above (left to right): Mezcal, bitters, gin and liqueurs play a big role in the cocktail culture. At left: Bittercube is a popular brand of bitters.

ing of  
 while  
 ording  
 causes  
 seams  
 es that  
 carpal



Gin is coming back into vogue. Popular brands include Plymouth from England (left), Bluecoat from the United States and Citadelle from France.

tunnel syndrome (or worse) by using this method exclusively.

**GIN** is experiencing a resurgence, due in part to small-batch and locally produced products around the world. Plymouth, from England, supposedly gave birth to the martini, and Scotland's Hendricks is infused with cucumber and flavored with rose petals. Blue (Austria) is made with 29 different botanicals; Citadelle, made in France, is distilled one cask at a time; and Martin Miller's Gin, made in England and finished in Iceland, is "born of love, obsession and some degree of madness." Here in

the United States, local favorites include Bluecoat (Philadelphia Distilling) and Leopold Bros. from Denver.

**LIQUEURS** are a key component of new cocktails, and bartenders continue to search for exotic creations and historical favorites. The most recent revival is Crème Yvette, made from vanilla and parma violet petals;

extinct since 1969, it was recreated last year by Rob Cooper, inventor of St. Germain elderflower liqueur. Other offbeat selections include G. Miclo, made from pink roses; Damiana, distilled from a shrublike bush in Baja California, Mexico; and Perique, produced by steeping Louisiana tobacco in grape spirit prior to distillation. ♦

"... Citadelle, made in France, is distilled one cask at a time..."