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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
TOM SANDHAM & BEN MCFARLAND
THINKING DRINKERS

THE DISTILLED GUIDE TO: FOOD



WELCOME TO THE EIGHTH EDITION OF 2019 SPIRITS SUPPLEMENTS FROM DISTILLED.

Our final Distilled edition for 2019 focusses on a topic which I am sure is a firm favourite amongst many of us – food! And not just food, but food and spirits – what a pairing!

The concepts of the 'aperitif' and 'digestif' certainly aren't new ones, but when it comes to matching food to drinks, spirits haven't always been front of mind. However, with the growing consumer trend towards spirits and a range of great brands on the market, it really should be one to consider. Our Distilled guide to food will hopefully provide some inspiration on how to promote spirits with food, particularly, as we approach the important festive season.

To get the taste buds going, the aperitif, usually dry and refreshing, is the perfect way to start a meal. Ketel One Citroen is a staple for a variety of aperitif serves including a zesty martini or the alternative Andalusian Buck, sharpened with some manzanilla sherry.

Next up Villa Asoeti gin which uses acutely Italian ingredients including Moscato grapes, fresh mint and thyme. Perfect with Italian-style small plates or sushi. Sticking with seafood, oysters specifically and not the usual vodka pairing you would expect! Yardhead whisky is sweet and mellow which with sea-salty oysters creates an intense savoury/sweet balance on the palate.

Gin Sul has botanical influences from around the world – heavily influenced from Portugal and Germany, it also matches nicely with spicy dishes such as curry. It's got the botanical freshness to slice through the heat and, the effervescence of a tonic mixer, prepares the palate for the next mouthful.

For a bit of sweet and spice, Glenfiddich Fire & Cane is a must try. It may well divide opinions but it's a great conversation point and perfectly matched with spicy foods and meats. Old Forester is a great Bourbon and will jazz up any BBQ-style burger and ribs menu and perfect in a Smash serve.



If you fancy something a little different to a sloe gin this winter, try Boodles Mulberry Gin. It works as a great alternative to port to compliment a rich blue cheese and the berries sweet and tart flavour balances beautifully with game and duck dishes.

Onto a couple of fruity rums. Hoxton Banana is bottled at 40% abv so doesn't have the sweet and sometimes artificial tones of some banana rums. Perfect for sipping after an indulgent meal or with a pudding course. RedLeg Caramelised Pineapple will certainly spice up your rum range. Made with natural caramel and pineapple flavours along with Jamaican ginger and vanilla spices, it's perfect over ice-cream or in your favourite rum cocktail.

Think chocolate orange and your first thought isn't likely to be a gin! The team at Sipsmith have cleverly combined orange blossom, black cardamom and raw cacao nibs to create wonderfully rich, dark chocolatey character in their juniper-heavy gin.

Cold brew coffee is creating a buzz across the high street, which you can bring to life with Slane Irish Whiskey, for a cool twist on the traditional Irish Coffee. Make sure you have some interesting coffee serves on your menu to maximise the spirits opportunity at the end of a meal.

Finally, our mixer addition from Franklin & Sons is a personal favourite of mine. Rosemary tonic water with black olive is just a delicious balance of herbaceous and salty flavours, which is perfect with a vermouth and olive garnish.

Hopefully that has given you some inspiration for pairing spirits and food for the winter season as well as getting your taste buds going...
Bon Appétit!

Katie Hewitt
Category Manager Spirits

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THE GUIDE TO FOOD

We are fans of eating, which is useful, because food is essential for life. Some people argue spirits are less essential, but we tend to ignore these people. Spirits to us are as important as food. Even if medical experts disagree, we can give them equal billing in this Distilled special edition, because food and spirits or cocktails pair brilliantly. Added to which, the rise of street food culture combined with the casual dining phenomenon, has created a customer that now demands quality chow with a discerning drink. Food and spirits are now definitely a thing, and for bar owners, both should be essential.

To an extent we're preaching to the converted, because the UK is packed with bar professionals who are already working closely with chefs, carefully sourcing food

locally and finding ways to align the kitchen with the bar menu. This special edition of Distilled pays tribute to some of them, but not all, because there simply aren't enough pages to recognise the nationwide talent. Even so, we've got some excellent examples across the pages.

Phil Robins in Edinburgh's new Camera bar is a fine example to get you started. The bar sits under the restaurant Sonder, and while it is a separate entity, chef and bar team work together. As a result, the Camera drinks complement the vibe of the restaurant with a lively palate cleanser that blends Grand Marnier / Bitters / Sugar / Blanc de Blanc and sets you up for Sonder's beef short rib, watercress, soy, pickled onions. Turn to page 12 to get a fascinating insight

into opening a new bar and the decisions Phil took, from concept to cocktail menu.

Part of the ambition with this special edition was to turn a spotlight onto specific spirits, so we're delighted that Deano Moncrieffe took time out to provide some tequila talk on page 4. His new bar Hacha has earned almost instant global recognition and is a stunning blend of delicious agave drinks and fantastic Mexican cuisine.

We've also taken a look at liqueurs with Grand Marnier and the drinks of Victor Maggiolo at the Savoy's American Bar, and considered gin after enjoying a dinner where Four Pillars was used in a series of dishes.

For whisky advice, we turn to Ervin Trykowski, who as a bar professional set up the Glasgow Bartenders Club, and who now travels the world talking whisky as an ambassador for Diageo Malts. One of the more recent projects for The Singleton single malt whisky was to work with world-famous pastry chef and 'pie king' Calum Franklin for an evening to pair his creations with whisky, and we report back on the suggestions.

We also talk about the meal that is chips. Yep, chips. For some people, chips are a side dish or snack, but thanks to Poptata we can now consider them our main course. A street food sensation, Poptata has chip stalls in sites across London, and more recently added a bar with excellent cocktails. On page 30 owner Marco Maiocchi tells us how the chips work with the cocktails.

Finally there's a bit of a round-up on page 22 for anyone dipping a toe into the world of food and spirits. This provides some top-line flavour ideas and the spirits that might work well with familiar bar favourites.

Hopefully, then, a decent dollop of inspiration for you; plenty to pile onto your plate as you weigh up the food and drink on menus in your own bars.

AGAVE AFFECTION AGAVE AFFECTION AGAVE



THE RISE AND RISE OF AGAVE SPIRITS, AND THE BASIC UNDERSTANDING MOST PEOPLE HAVE AROUND MEXICAN FOOD, MAKES THE MATCH OF SPIRIT AND CUISINE AN EASY WIN AT THE BAR.

BAR OWNER DEANO MONCRIEFFE KNOWS THIS BETTER THAN ANYONE, HAVING OPENED HIS OWN AGAVE SPIRITS AND FOOD BAR HACHA IN LONDON. DEANO HAS WORKED IN THE DRINKS INDUSTRY FOR DECADES, AND IS A RENOWNED EXPERT WHEN IT COMES TO AGAVE SPIRITS, SO PROVES THE PERFECT PERSON TO BRING PAIRINGS WITH TEQUILA AND MEZCAL TO THE MASSES.

Last year we were lucky enough to travel to Mexico and sample outstanding tequila with legendary distiller Carlos Camarena in Jalisco, before a trip to Oaxaca where we enjoyed the awesome mezcal of QuiQuiRiQui. One takeaway from the trip, in case there had been any doubt before we travelled, was that agave spirits work brilliantly with food, particularly the native cuisines. Take a blanco, for example: the spice and fresh quality of the spirit are obvious, but with 100% agave tequila you'll also find a sweet quality. This combination of flavours makes it a perfect pair with seafood, vegetable dishes, but particularly ceviches or crudos. A rich reposado, meanwhile, works brilliantly with fattier meat dishes, the modest oak aging amplifying the sweet notes of agave to pair with spicy pork or beer dishes. Drinking neat tequila in the best Mexican restaurants was a true highlight of the trip.

This relationship between Mexican spirit and cuisine has been part of the British consciousness for a while, but only a handful of quality bar owners or agave aficionados have managed to honour the culture. The iconic Cafe Pacifico in London's Covent Garden always springs to mind, and more recently the work of Stuart McCluskey in Edinburgh, whose El Cartel sites are fantastic.

Now we can add Deano Moncrieffe and his London bar Hacha to the list. Based in Dalston, this is a venue that presents agave spirits in all their glory and pairs them with innovative and authentic flavours along the way.

'The main inspiration behind opening Hacha was to make agave spirits more approachable in a simple yet new way,' says Deano. 'My idea was "less is more", which is why there are only 25 spirits on my back bar, we call this the agave list. The list constantly changes: whenever I feel like I want to freshen it up, I bring in new bottles.'



Hacha is the name of the rather hefty axe used to split the agave piña in half before it is cooked. It's a brutal tool, as it needs to be, because agave piñas are massive and this is a tough job, but when it comes to Deano's bar, the aligning of food and drink flavours is far more subtle and innovative. To this end, Deano presents the tequila with flavour enhancers – small edible tasters that pair with the flavours of a designated agave spirit.

'I wanted to make agave approachable in a unique way, so I pair each spirit with a specific flavour enhancer that brings out the characteristics of that particular spirit. Think anything from a mezcal being served with milky bars, garlic and chilli olives, to even beef-flavoured Monster Munch crisps! We have a raicilla, served with 3 drops of CBD oil which brings out incredible earthy and grassy notes and is a stunning enhancer that has proved really popular. We have tequilas paired with anything from Seedlip Garden to chargrilled pineapple soaked in rum.'

There's a lot of prep, experimentation and the occasional bit of science behind the idea, but in essence, it's really simple. Deano knows his agave spirits inside out, has selected an eclectic rotating mix of styles, and then found some familiar or unfamiliar flavour companions to make it an education for the customer. And it's a fascinating talking point in the bar, that has proved incredibly popular with customers. Hacha has a food menu, and we'll get to that, but these flavour enhancers have been a big win.

'I would say the biggest surprise has been how many customers are trying the agave spirits for the first time, and how they love the idea of the different flavour enhancers. In just over six weeks we've sold around 50 bottles of different agave spirits, which is an incredible achievement. This has probably been the most pleasing thing for me, because it backs up my theory that if you have fewer options then customers are more likely to experiment. I'm 100% convinced that if I had 150 different agave spirits on the list, I would've sold a lot fewer different bottles, because too many choices can be slightly bewildering for a casual consumer.'

Another win for bringing new people to agave spirits has been the cocktail menu. Designed to be approachable but interesting, the drinks are also recognisable in name but different in appearance and ingredients.

'The mirror margarita is a number-one-selling serve and it's fair to say that everyone absolutely loves it. It took about three months for me to perfect it, and it's an absolutely crystal-clear margarita served on the rocks and has all the characteristics and flavours you would find in a regular margarita. It's tequila-based but I've just finally managed to create a mezcal version, which is being launched very soon.



'I think it's fair to say that most of our local customers are not coming because they are fans of agave spirits; they are coming because they are fans of good cocktails and they love the ambience and space we have created. The vast majority have been pleasantly surprised by how versatile agave spirits are.'

It helps that the bar also looks stunning. 'My partner and business partner Emma Murphy is the creative director, and she did everything from the interior design to all of the marketing and branding, so she deserves enormous credit for how Hacha looks and feels as a bar.'

The flavour enhancers alone earn Hacha a place in this supplement dedicated to food, but Deano has also ensured the wider food menu plays to the strengths of the spirits. 'The food was massively important and we wanted it to be Mexican-inspired with a Latin twist,' he explains. 'The kitchen is a resident kitchen by Conga and they are amazing. During our development stages we worked closely on the flavours I was trying to create in the cocktails, and how they would work well with the food; even though we don't call it a direct pairing it was important that there was synergy between the two. The food is amazing and has been so well received. My main focus was to make everything small plates and shareable, because I think that is that the essence of Mexican community; it's about people coming together and having a great time – the food and drink.

'We have dishes like a Mexican ceviche served on fried breadfruit, yuca chips, pulled pork tostadas, Mexican prawns on green plantain tostadas; but our most popular dishes are also vegan and vegetarian, like the spicy black bean tacos and spiced aubergine tostadas.'



Such an offering means Hacha is far from a novelty. Deano is drawing customers in with the concept, he's convincing them agave spirits are worth a try with the serves and enhancers, but then he's encouraging them to stay for the evening with a food menu that enables them to make a night of it. The success is perhaps emphasised by the popularity of mezcal here. Once a bartender secret, thought to be too assertive and challenging for the customers, the stories and intrigue behind this rustic spirit are now genuinely having an impact. Deano is proving that if you can get the punters to the bar and offer an interesting experience, they will be encouraged to try something new.

'So far, the most popular spirit has been mezcal, by a country mile,' he says. 'Our customers are fascinated by the artisanal, small-batch, traditional story behind the category. I think there's an element of romanticism around it. On average we do around 16 mezcal flights a week and 10 tequila flights a week, which has been a big success considering we are 48 covers (including outside). This doesn't include people just buying a single serve, which is very often.'

On one hand, Hacha is a simple, neighbourhood bar in Dalston; others might even imagine it to be like a 'theme bar'; but Deano and the team have put so much energy and thought into the experience that it is much more than either of these things. It's a genuine spirits experience. People are coming from all over the country to see what he's achieved, and perhaps more importantly than that, he's proving agave spirits can be a real asset behind any bar.

ALMA DE



CUBA

There was a time, not that long ago, when all you could eat and drink at Alma de Cuba in Liverpool was a very small glass of red wine and a piece of wafer.

The huge impressive structure, which now houses one of Liverpool's most impressive venues, was once the oldest surviving Catholic church in Liverpool until it closed down in the late 70s.

Mother Teresa even attended Mass there but now those stepping into this building created for the worship of Christ are doing so with entirely different spiritual reasons. Alma de Cuba is a divine drinking and dining concept, one of several venues in Liverpool owned by Signature Living, whose reputation as one of the most innovative and exciting operators in the UK is continuing to grow – the company is renowned for Liverpool's newly opened football-themed Dixie Dean Hotel, the Titanic-themed 30 James Street and a portfolio that stretches to Belfast, Cardiff and Preston.

While Alma de Cuba translates as "Soul of Cuba", the food and drink here draws on all manner of influences with that of Latin America being the most pronounced. The food offering is accessible and down to earth, never pretentious, with dishes that are honest, well-crafted and designed with the guest in mind.

"Our culinary influences are massively varied! While we are a Cuban-themed restaurant, we have to remember that our guests are in Liverpool for a huge number of reasons," says Matthew Cox, Signature Living's Group Executive Chef. "So, we try to reflect the DNA of the restaurant in our menus; they're vibrant, colourful, spicy, Latin and most of all loved."



When designing the menus for both the restaurant and the bar, Matthew strives to create customer journey for guests, regardless of whether they're a regular or one of the growing number of tourists visiting the city. "Every customer is equally important and from our point of view, it's essential that we don't take them for granted or assume that we know what they want," he said. "We try to cater to all palates and give everybody something to love."

It's essential to not just keep up with fast-paced food and drink trends but to be seen as setting them. "Food trends are a constant evolution and trends can change from day to day – the key to a fresh business is to try and set them rather than follow them," said Matthew. "I think everyone knows when a trend is really taking hold as no matter where you go to eat or drink you get almost a carbon copy of the last place you went."

In terms of drinks trends, Instagram and social media have catalysed change. "What was laughed at a couple of years ago as being kitsch, old fashioned and obsolete is now the go-to drink in the bars in the city."

"It doesn't take a lot to change trends as social media is responsible for everything changing at warp speed. 20 years ago it would take people multiple nights out to be aware of a new trend or gimmick, now it can be shared in minutes. As the name suggests, influencers are also responsible for changes and demands."

While one eye needs to be kept on culinary trends emerging from elsewhere, creativity in the kitchen is key to the business. The Head Chef and her team are given 100% freedom to experiment and test anything they think will work best for their restaurant – and have the final say on anything coming into the kitchen or ultimately going on the menu.

"We run specials, so we'll introduce items daily if time allows," added Matt. "We do wholesale changes to the menu quarterly, roughly in line with the seasons. But the fluctuating British weather can catch you unaware – it can be quite embarrassing to launch a summer menu in rain and freezing sleet, but it's been known to happen!"

Essential to Alma de Cuba's approach is the close collaboration between the bar and the kitchen "The two absolutely need to work together in order for the business to function," said Matt. "On a day to day basis, they talk, discuss and probably argue about flavour pairings and how each team can support the other."

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"The bar cannot upsell drinks to diners without the diner being there in the first place. Also, a diner won't stay long in the restaurant without good service and a perfect drink to accompany their meal." Matthew admits that, in terms of margin and GP, there is traditionally more money to be made from beers and wines. "But that gap is getting smaller as people's tastes and palates develop and they like a more refined wine or a craft ale."



ALMA

The mantra at Alma de Cuba is that "it's never too early for a cocktail". Staff are trained to only suggest cocktails with food where appropriate. "We try to make sure that food and drink is never pigeonholed and that no combination is too 'out there'," explains Matthew. "Within reason, our bar offering should complement every item on our menu. There are some that are probably a push – like a cocktail with a bowl of soup and a steak – but in general we try and keep everything accessible to all."

As ever, communication with the customer is key. "It's important to learn more about your guest as there can be a multitude of reasons why they may not want cocktails," added Matthew. "The sooner you can learn what their evening is about, the sooner you know what their drink expectations might be. A quick bite to eat after work before driving home is obviously not the correct time to be pushing our alcoholic cocktails but if it's a date night that will end in a bar or club, then that changes everything."

Whenever you increase the secondary spend, there is always potential for profit and upsells are the past, present and future of all successful businesses. "A well drilled service and bar staff that are always pushing high margin, positive GP drinks will support the business through all dips and troughs" added Matthew. "As long as each element of each drink is well-costed, and your sales staff are competently trained then profit is attainable."

As part of their training, all staff must try all the dishes and cocktails on the menu and the company organises mini cook-offs when new staff start; and a big all staff cook-off when the menu changes.

One of the most popular dishes on the menu is one that draws on a classic Cuban cocktail from Havana – the Mojito Lamb. "It's a very clever dish that works on two influences, with mint being the predominant flavour of a mojito and the most natural of accompaniment to lamb," said Matthew. "It tastes amazing, as well as potentially being a signature dish for us for years to come! Our wonderful Head Chef is completely responsible for this."

Another pairing occurs after the main course, with a profitable glass of port paired with the dessert and cheese board. "This is a nod to tradition and not something that everyone goes for. However, it is the most natural of combinations, the sweetness of port and the saltiness and tang of a good blue cheese," added Matthew.

"Tradition has lasted for a long time for a reason. Staff are well versed in what to recommend but we don't forcefully sell anything and it is only ever a suggestion to enhance the offering. That, and I love port!"

In light of the success of aperitifs such as the Aperol Spritz and the Negroni, the pre-dinner moment also represents a profit-making opportunity – and proof that trends can appear from unexpected sources.

"Not too long ago, Aperol would have been a bottle gathering dust at the back of the bar. It's absolutely the same for the Negroni as well, I can remember a time not too long ago that it was a very real conversation to remove Campari, vermouth and Aperol from the bars. Now they are a big part of drinks poured each and every weekend."

With a multitude of booths on the ground floor, a substantial chunk of spirit sales are presented by bottles sales – often before or after a meal.

"It's a phenomenally huge part of the business as we are now so well known for our booth packages," added Matthew. "There's an even split between gin and vodka and they are both drinks that can go with a variety of mixers – but what they start drinking to what they end up drinking is sometimes wildly different."

IN THE PICTURE



PHIL ROBINS HAS RECENTLY OPENED THE CAMERA BAR IN EDINBURGH, BASED BENEATH THE RESTAURANT SONDER. HERE HE GIVES A FASCINATING INSIGHT INTO HIS APPROACH TO SETTING UP A NEW BAR, AND THE RELATIONSHIP THE BAR HAS WITH THE RESTAURANT.



TELL US ABOUT THE BAR

We're called Camera, and opened in April 2019 in the south side of Edinburgh, really near The Meadows. Three of us worked on the overall dynamic of the place; the style, the flow and how we wanted it to feel. I think it's the perfect number because we all brought a different perspective and approach, but there was always someone to cast a deciding vote if it was necessary. At the time, I was reading a book and the expression 'in camera' came up between a lawyer and the main character. I'd never heard it before so did a bit of research and it turns out it's a legal term for 'in private'. The direct etymology of the word 'camera' is Latin, and it translates as 'vault' or 'chamber'. In a very literal sense, a camera is something that captures a moment and creates memories, so we all felt the name was a nice fit for our little basement bar – a private space to take a moment to yourself or share with people you enjoy being around.

WHAT HAVE YOU TRIED TO CREATE?

We've tried to create a place where people feel happy, relaxed and comfortable, regardless of whether they are the only person in the room or every seat is taken. Over the years, most of the bars I've worked in have thrived on really high energy. I always loved the idea of a bar as a sanctuary, rather than somewhere you felt as though you were just being swept along by everyone else's mood or behaviour. In Camera, by the time guests have been seated, they should have had three hellos from the team: one at the door, one by whoever is on the floor and one from whoever is behind the bar. Our menu is designed and worded in such a way that hopefully nothing feels intimidating and no questions feel silly. Our music is very carefully curated to be wonderful and interesting, either as the background to your conversation or if you are sitting and listening intently. We hope that the little points of detail put guests at ease and build a mutual trust and respect over the course of a visit.

WHY IS IT A UNIQUE PROPOSITION FOR EDINBURGH?

I think what we are hoping to do is encourage people to relax into their night out a little bit more, make it a bit less of a mission and a bit more of a slow and steady thing. As a bar, you've got a responsibility to make tasty drinks for people – that's the most basic requirement, making sure you clean your beer lines regularly, your glassware is well maintained, etc. On top of that, it is totally up to you how much you celebrate your guests and how you go about doing that. We've worked that back so every action has a purpose, and at each step we try to take the focus away from a server and customer relationship, and build it into a much more human interaction.



HOW IMPORTANT HAS YOUR SPIRITS SELECTION BEEN?

Our spirits selection was hugely important in the overall makeup of the bar. First and foremost, a lot of thought went into constructing an offering that motivated the team through the creativity they are encouraged to showcase. We've tried to be as ruthless as possible in how many of each spirit we stock, to force us to do our research and only stock products the whole team is behind. It's easy to write a list of 20 of your favourite albums, but it's much harder to pick your top three. Secondly, we wanted to champion producers who are trying to break the mould and don't necessarily fit easily into an existing category. Our back bar is laid out geographically to encourage conversation and make it easier for the team to interact with guests in a way that is interesting for both parties.

WHAT HAS GUIDED YOUR CHOICES?

Above all, quality and tastiness. That doesn't mean to say we only stock 'premium' products. Out of our three Scotch whiskies at the moment, only one of them costs us over £40 per bottle, but every guest who has wanted a whisky has been blown away by whichever one they have been recommended. We want everything on the bar to be accessible for anyone out looking to have a nice time, and hopefully in the process of making them feel comfortable through the overall experience, they come across and try something they haven't tried before.

WHAT ARE YOU PARTICULARLY PROUD OF?

I'm proud of the simplicity of our drinks. Working towards simplicity in every facet of life and work is quite a difficult thing to achieve, I think, and I've never really bought into things just being done for the sake of it or because they are 'on trend.' I think if you set out your own objectives and try and stick to them, rather than trying to hit someone else's brief of what's cool or whatever, you end up with something with way more integrity and authenticity. We've tried to have a lot of fun with our drinks and make sure they are relatable. The first drink on our first menu is a drink we described as 'Robinson's diluting juice for people pretending to be grown ups'. It puts people at ease and is a really tasty low-ABV number made with Aelder Elderberry Elixir, thyme liqueur, apple vinegar and pressed apple juice. I had caught up with the guys at Aelder while we were still in the planning stage of the bar, and had been so impressed by their ethos and how they went about their business. It's nice to try and buck the trend of bars demanding support from the booze brands, and try and throw all the guys who are doing great work some support the other way, no strings attached. I think it makes for much more genuine relationships. I also have a soft spot for the Strega Sour we popped on early bells. It was our first ever market menu drink and was made with Strega, lemon juice, chocolate bitters and some foaming agent. Again, the construction of this drink couldn't be simpler, but using the Strega for all of the sweetness and using so few ingredients for a drink with so many layers of complexity in terms of flavour and texture, I think that's what this drinks making thing is all about. Rhys (our bar manager) has subsequently come in and taken the drinks to a whole new level, but I like to think I gave him the platform to shine, like when you can't open a jar and give it to someone else who does it no bother. You've always got to let them know you loosened it for them.



HOW IMPORTANT IS THE ROLE OF A PRE-DINNER DRINK?

I think we are still very set in our ways in terms of the structure of going out for a meal in this country. It's nice that the starter/main/dessert format has slowly started to fall by the wayside over the last few years and we are starting to adopt eating and drinking rituals from countries that just do it better than us. The pre-dinner drink perfectly showcases how our drinking attitudes are starting to change, too, with the widespread adoption of Italian spritz culture the most obvious example. The way we laid out the first drinks list for Sonder was under the titles Pre-Dinner Suggestions, Accompaniments and After Dinner Indulgence. It didn't really work at all, and so the team have reworked it now based on what guests seem most drawn towards. As far as specifically pre-dinner drinks go, I think it can have a huge bearing on the overall enjoyment of your whole evening, but ultimately it shouldn't be overthought. Highballs and spritzes make the most sense to me, and mean you can be consistent and experimental easily and at the same time.

WHAT IN YOUR OPINION IS THE BEST BLEND OF FLAVOURS AND TEXTURES THAT PREPARES THE PALATE FOR FOOD?

I love fine bubbles. I'm not a big champagne drinker at all but in one of my first bar jobs, we stocked Ruinart Blanc de Blanc. An absolute baller had come in, smashed a couple of glasses and left, so we all had a glass and I'd never thought about bubbles like that before. They were so perfect and fun. I think the smallest splash of soda changes everything, and especially when guests don't know it's there, it plays a nice game with their tongue and palate. Rhys just put a drink on the market menu using lemon yoghurt along with some pisco, Porter's Tropical Old Tom and white chocolate. Although it sounds more suitable for after dinner, it's soft and silky and the tartness of the drink gives it a wonderful length too: perfect for a pre-dinner palate cleanser. Flavour-wise, I really think you can go in any direction. The Cocoa Collins at Coupette in Bethnal Green is hands-down the best 'pre-dinner' drink I've ever had. I was smiling the whole way through it. Again, rum and cacao don't seem like flavours you'd necessarily associate with pre-meal, but it did pretty cool things to my mouth. My kind of meal prep.

"WE ONLY HAVE FIVE COCKTAILS ON OUR MAIN MENU"

WHAT IS THE MARKET MENU CONCEPT?

We wanted to keep our main menu super tight and concise, as we wanted it to be a stepping stone for guests to order purely based on their flavour preferences. We only have five cocktails on our main menu, and the market menu is the bridge between guests wanting to play it safe and going completely into the unknown. The ultimate aim of the market menu is to encourage creativity and ownership from the team and get live feedback from guests. It also gives guests a fair bit of ownership as to what makes it onto the main menu, as we encourage them to be as vocal as possible in terms of what they like and dislike about the market menu drinks. We go for singular flavour descriptions as names for the drinks, such as Grass, Strawberries and Liquorice Allsorts. The market menu is set up to be fun, practical and interesting.

DO YOU WORK WITH THE CHEF FOR INSPIRATION IN THE COCKTAILS? OR VICE VERSA?

Definitely. Paul's palate is unbelievable, and he is as honest as they come so doesn't hold back. He often suggests combinations he thinks will work or something he has worked on that turned out better than he thought it would. A lot of the time, the blueprint won't turn into a dish that is menu-worthy, but the components will give us inspiration for a drink.

WHAT IS THE CHEF'S VIEW ON THE BEST DRINK PRE DINNER?

Paul quite likes his short, boozy numbers before or after dinner. We did a drink with Cynar, Ocho, grapefruit and soda which was a big pre-dinner hit with the kitchen team. As far as 'the best' goes, he wouldn't give a straight answer, as he would argue that that depends entirely on setting, company and what you're having for your dinner.



HOW DO YOU APPROACH THE MATCHING OF SPIRITS AND COCKTAILS WITH FOOD?

With cocktails, usually I would start by looking at whether it would make more sense for the drinks to complement or contrast with the food. I think ratios of booze are hugely important, as not only do you not want the drinks totally taking over the palate, but you really don't want guests to be steaming halfway through their meal. So watch the ABV. Change up the textures. Keep servings relatively small. Make sure they fit with the menu visually. Meanwhile, every spirit can be used in food pairing. I usually tend to use younger spirits and it's easy to lean more towards light, clean spirits, but it's probably more exciting to try and go bold and then rein in the big flavours of, say, whisky or a big dirty Jamaican rum.

WHAT IS IT ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP AND CONCEPT BETWEEN BAR AND RESTAURANT THAT SETS YOU APART?

It might be a total cop-out but we are just doing what we do. I think if you set out to try and do something to try and please everyone, you can end up a bit lost and without an identity. We have looked at the building as a whole, the area and the city we are in, and tried to get the most out of all of those things. We have a young, hungry team and have set up in a way that encourages them to look at the bar as their own. We want people who come in to be blown away by how much the team love what they do. I think if you start there and then continue to analyse, develop and learn, then you're on to a winner.



**Design is
a crucial
element of
getting a food
offering working in
the bar; one city that
we've noticed getting
this spot on
is Birmingham.**

The city is fast emerging as an inspirational bar scene, but with a burgeoning street food culture that has cleverly crept into the cocktail culture.

With this in mind, we asked Catherine Gwynne of 2G Design and Build (www.2gdesignandbuild.com), a company responsible for the design of some of the best bars in the city, to offer up some ideas. Here she turns her focus to foodin bars and how to best communicate this area of your business, considering everything from 'Instagrammable' features to efficient and functional bars and even the toilets.

WHY IS DESIGN IN A BAR SO CRUCIAL TO THE BUSINESS?

Design of the bar itself is key because it becomes a focal area and can be an incredible source of creativity. It will give customers a perfect first impression, and a well-designed bar reflects the personality of a place. It can define a space and allows the ever-desired 'instagrammableness'.

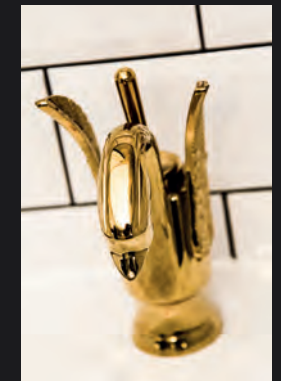
Most importantly, the design of the bar is crucial for functionality and efficiency. Many people ignore the detail of the design of their bar, and so overlook the elements of flow of people (for both employees and customers). This impacts the efficiencies of how to serve during peak times. We have recently redesigned The Cuban Embassy in Moseley for that exact reason. They had a compact bar in the middle of the venue and it meant staff were leaning over each other to create cocktails at speed. We moved the bar to the side of the venue and created a long serving area with individual cocktail stations. This has meant they can serve a lot more customers quickly, with more space for customers to drink.

ARE THERE ELEMENTS OF DESIGN THAT HELP COMMUNICATE THAT THE BAR SERVES FOOD?

A design is unique to an area; it should reflect the personality of place, so subtle nods to the food are crucial to tie in the two. In practical terms, seating is important to design of a space that serves food, so: comfortable and accessible seating.

We often zone areas, which should be done subtly through colours and materials, but can create an area that allows comfortable eating. This is how we created Tap & Tandoor, a bar we created in Solihull that serves Indian street food paired with craft beer. We needed to create a space that allowed families and friends to come and enjoy a comfortable meal but also an inviting space for the drinking consumer – who could have a snack or simply enjoy the eclectic bar drinks menu. The venue can be very full at weekends, and the combination works very well.

It's worth noting that it's highly popular to open up kitchens to show that this is an offering, and lighting is imperative in portraying the right environment for the type of cuisine in the right environment.



HOW IMPORTANT IS CONCEPT?

Concept is imperative. We start every design with defining a concept. The concept is the backbone of the entire project. The concept is a collection of design elements that sets the tone and direction, and reflects everything that you are about and what you are trying to achieve – this will work into the detail of colour, texture, patterns etc.

We have worked with Alex Claridge on Nocturnal Animals and The Wilderness, which are different reflections of his personality. The concept was crucial to understanding this and the atmosphere he wanted to create. The Wilderness is a good manifestation of his vision and cuisine, for example, and worth checking out. It's hard to advise on a general concept for anyone reading this and starting from scratch; genuinely every project is unique, and styles and concepts are unique to every one.



ARE THERE ELEMENTS PEOPLE OVERLOOK?

Toilets in all bars are becoming increasingly important. When serving food, there has been research to say that people judge the standard of food by the toilets. But another element that must be considered is the world of social media. A well designed, quirky toilet is gold dust for bars wanting presence on Instagram – people love a good toilet selfie! These often work within a concept, and themed toilets are a lot of fun! We worked on Café Colette, where art deco was the theme throughout, and designed four separate toilets that worked like this. Each one was unique and quirky – we used inspiration from a number of sources including Miami Vice and flapper-girl 'powder rooms'. The result was exactly the effect we wanted.

ARE THERE ANY COMMON DESIGN MISTAKES BARS WILL MAKE WHEN TRYING TO COMMUNICATE THE FOOD SIDE OF BUSINESS?

There are a lot of mistakes ... but some [factors] that come to mind instantly are:

- Music and acoustics of a place that allow an inviting atmosphere for eating customers;
- Furniture layout – having the right furniture to be multi-purpose;
- Efficiency of the layout so as to allow for an efficient flow of people that can combine a busy drinking environment with an enticing space for those wanting to enjoy food;
- Many places are redesigning a historical site where food was not an offering (i.e. an old run-down pub/bar). Therefore, a re-launch and redesign (with the elements discussed above) is crucial to take old impressions away and give people an incentive to try the cuisine. With all designs you must always respect the loyal base as well as give new customers a reason to visit.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF IN TERMS OF THE PROJECTS YOU'VE WORKED ON AND WHY?

We are proud of many projects for different reasons:

- The work at The Cuban Embassy was a project that had a clear aim of bringing efficiency to the business, while giving the feel you have just jumped into the heart of Havana. We absolutely achieved this, and footfall has increased notably. It has also allowed more space for the food in the evenings that matches the style of the bar.
- Our work on Nocturnal Animals was to build the space with the many intricate design elements and reflect the personalities within the design. The result is a high-standard build that is an Instagrammable wonderland. It is a bar that has absolutely combined an incredible bar area with a restaurant.
- Tap & Tandoor was a very run-down pub in a failing area, and we needed to bring a whole new lease of life to the place and to subtly intertwine Indian street food with craft beer. It needed to welcome families, beer drinkers, cocktail drinkers, sport watchers and foodies all within one venue. The design was crucial to this, and it has become an absolute success story as it immediately worked, and venue number two is currently being completed.
- The Wilderness needed to ensure it reflected the 'rock and roll fine dining' that Alex is well known for. It reflects his fine-dining taster menus yet also the informality and uniqueness of Alex himself.
- As mentioned, the build of Café Colette to reflect the art deco and the awesome design of the toilets, has been a great Instagrammable treat! We were proud of what we achieved there.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF IN TERMS OF THE PROJECTS YOU'VE WORKED ON AND WHY?

BlackTail in New York and Lyanness in London are amazing. Also, a bit less obvious – but incredible – is Bar The Clinic, in Santiago, Chile. This is a political bar where menus for the food are on newspapers, yet it creates an environment that is informal and inviting for the drinker and the foodie...

Not everyone reading this will be trying to present customers with complex cuisine, but with a focus on some simple standards you start to learn that most food can be enhanced with the appearance of some spirits. Here are a few very basic flavour suggestions that can cover popular fare from the kitchen.

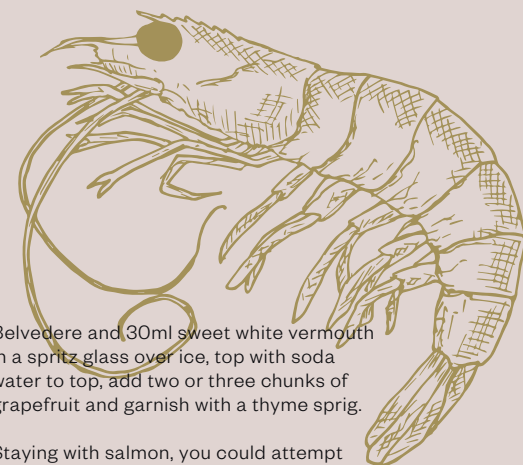
STARTERS

Depending on the scale of your seafood haul, you might not expect to bait the customer with an ocean of options. But even if you put a little fish on, just for the halibut, you can find some easy pairing wins. If you're looking to pair spirits with light fresh starter dishes, try gin with shrimp. Sounds a bit fishy but seriously, list it and then reel them in.... it's a real oppor-tuna-ty (that's enough now, we're floundering). We were impressed by the combination in California, and to be more specific, it was with a martini, but it was the zest and botanical spice of the gin with the lightly seasoned sea food that combined marvellously.

Pairing gin with seafood shouldn't come as a total surprise, gin and Oysters for example, that has long been a combo, but the point is, seafood and spirits can be a surprising but successful package for the punters.

Son of A Gun in LA offers up a shrimp toast sandwich with hoisin, herbs and sriracha mayo which pairs perfectly with an aviation off their classics menu. Gins like Villa Ascenti, with its pungent and assertive Italian botanicals, herbal and a slight mint as well as citrus gives you an idea of the seasoning scope.

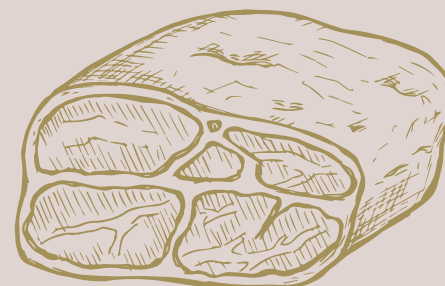
Vodka with caviar is more obvious, if a little indulgent, but vodka works across the more textured, often meaty fish, or something a little oily and salty like smoked salmon. In fact, try the Belvedere Spritz served up with a simple salmon dish and celebrate the contrast between oil, fat and smoke with light, carbonated citrus. Simply pour 30ml



Belvedere and 30ml sweet white vermouth in a spritz glass over ice, top with soda water to top, add two or three chunks of grapefruit and garnish with a thyme sprig.

Staying with salmon, you could attempt the Scandinavian traditional aquavit with smoked salmon, gravlax and cured fish. Very low on prep, but enough to provoke a bit of conversation with the customer. Another vodka to consider here would be the Icelandic spirit Reyka, a really clean, grain vodka that has the added talking point of being distilled using sustainable energy from geothermal heat.

But experiment, Mark Hix who has made a beautiful job of blending brilliant cocktails with his cuisine, and once suggested a Lagavulin butter to go on a lobster. After our own experience of pairing Isla whisky with freshly caught shellfish by the water at the Lagavulin distillery, we can attest this is a quality combination. Islay whiskies in general are a great addition to food pairing plans, the smoke of a whisky like Laphroaig 10 Year Old for example, provide an assertive backbone to subtle dishes, or indeed cheese dishes or chocolate at the end of the meal.



MAIN

While it was meat 'n' veg when we were growing up, it's increasingly just veg for a lot of people. And for those who still require the meat, it's always ok to go with meat 'n' whiskey.

MEAT

Having just returned from Dallas Texas, we can highly recommend anything bbq'd with American whiskey. One of the best culinary experiences of our lives was at the Pecan Lodge, at the famous 'Pittmaster' – a plate of Brisket, pulled pork, sausage, topped with slaw, bbq sauce and fresh sliced jalapeños. We were there with the exceptional Texas Single Malt Balcones, and whether served neat or as a whisky and soda, it really does combine beautifully with all or any of that meat.

In the supplement listings you'll find Old Forrester, a stand up bourbon, and bourbon is a useful ally in meat matching since the spirit has the oaky assertive tannins to cut through the fat, but with strong caramel and vanilla to match with flavours in the meat, particularly a burger.

But venture wider on the meat and look to seasoned chicken dishes with an alternative spirit upgrade. Jerk chicken for example with simple Appleton rum highball serve, work in Jamaica, so should work in your bar. Wray & Ting was once a thing when we were young drinks writers, it still works, the overproof rum is lifted by the citrus and you can garnish with some lime or mint to improve the aesthetic.

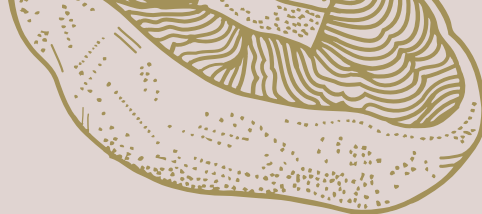
Hawksmoor is an essential recce for any meat lover, and the group has always put cocktails high on the agenda. Pay particular attention to the drinks menu, which has been arranged in order of occasions – so pre dinner and post dinner serves to match the mood of the customer. Another must-visit is MEATliquor, particularly the new site in Regent Street, on the site of the old Match Bar it has put strong emphasis on the cocktail menu and the excellent Shooting From the Hip (El Jimador tequila, blackcurrant and citrus goes with just about anything – it's also served in a huge hip flask which is a nice touch.

Meanwhile, since we'll have a gin martini with anything and since one of the best martinis you'll find is served at Happiness Forgets in London, we aren't averse to one in the bar's sister restaurant Petit Pois. It pairs perfectly with the fantastically seasoned but simple steak frites and knock-out Bernaise sauce.

VEG

Vegan and vegetarian options can be equally inventive or simple. The Hug & Pint in Glasgow is a great example of what can be achieved with this style of fare. The award-winning vegan restaurant offers a 'Boozy Brunch' for £20 – three dishes and three drinks of choice, including cocktails. Much of the food has an Asian influence and it's here that the vegetable dishes will shine, with the spice and stodge of curried dishes a perfect foil for high ball or spritzed up cocktails.

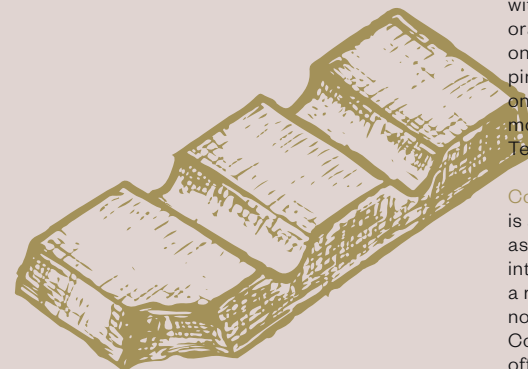
Beer is a little ahead of the pairing game, but Bundobust in Leeds is another useful research trip, the vegetarian dishes are based on Indian street food and largely suggested with craft beer. But the parallels between the textures and consistency of the dishes with the spirits pairing is obvious. The Desi 75 for example mixes Sipsmith's sloe gin, lemon juice and cinnamon syrup topped with Prosecco and pairs beautifully with the Bhel Puri a samosa pastry, with puffed rice, peas, red onion and tomato tossed in tamarind chutney and topped with pomegranate seeds. And if you want to get truly creative, try something in the glass that will match the fruits and spices on the plate, Hoxton Banana Rum for example, infuses both dried and fresh ripe bananas for five weeks, and works brilliantly neat or in a cocktail next to some spiced Indian banana fritters.



BIT OF AFTERS

We once read a science article that suggested eating chocolate after dinner can enhance the absorption of the amino acid tryptophan. We don't know what tryptophan is, nor why enhanced absorption would be beneficial, but it sounded like a defence for eating the stuff, so we nailed a Snickers Duo with a clear conscious.

Chocolate is about the easiest score any bar has for an upsell at the end of night. If you serve food and people eat dinner with you, they will automatically think about desert. Such psychological motivations have been drilled into us from when the first mush passed our toothless gums as babies - eat your greens and you get pudding. Sometimes people (weirdos) decide not to finish dinner with desert, but even these people (weirdos) will be craving something sweet, it's forced nature. This is where a simple offer of some chocolate will rarely be turned down, and if you stick the opportunity on a menu with an interesting spirit, you can score a sneaky upsell.



We're not suggesting After Eights here, although put them of the menu with a Grasshopper and you might be surprised at the uptake. Rather, this is more about a luxury chocolate serve that plays to the strength of some specific luxury spirits, so our favourite combinations:

Diplomatico Reserva Exclusiva – when the spirit itself tastes like chocolate you're off to a great start and in this luxury rum, you've got aromas of mocha and vanilla that convert on the palate with caramel and then an unmistakable chocolate flavour hitting the middle of the palate. This is the master of the chocolate pairing, there are no real limitations, making it one of the essential offerings on a post-dinner menu. The rum brand recently teamed up with luxury chocolatier Paul Young to spectacular effect. The Cornish Sea Salt chocolate is particularly appropriate if you're dropping any pirate entertainment with your post-meal rum pitch.

Quiquiriqui Mezcal – When we perform in Edinburgh we stay around the corner from Chocolate Tree in the Bruntsfield neighbourhood. These folks have picked up on the Spanish conquistador love of cacao in Mexico and have subsequently soaked the ancient oriollo hybrid cacao of Tabasqueño in Mezcal. Pretty amazing stuff. It works brilliantly with the smoke of a neat mezcal serve and Quiquiriqui is ideal with the smoke being slightly sweeter and subtler than some of the more rustic mezcals out there.

Sipsmith Orange & Cacao – Considering there's a hefty dose of juniper in this gin, there's an incredible marmalade rind aroma and a state of dark chocolate with candied orange and Madagascan vanilla. Made with orange blossom and cacao nibs, before resting the gin on fresh orange zest there's also a long-finish of fresh pine and ginger spice. It's a beautiful spirit, loads going on and a simply luxurious serve. But there can be no more appropriate pairing than with a segment from a Terry's Chocolate Orange.

Courvoisier VSOP – Finally Cognac and chocolate is a sure fire winner, with plenty of tradition attached as a pairing. Courvoisier VSOP is a great spirit for introducing people to Cognac, and could be served as a refreshing long drink at the end of the meal, there's no reason you have to stick to convention. But the Courvoisier range is a great example of how you can offer neat sipping variety. Due to the way they select their eau de vies from independent producers, you'll find a broad style at Courvoisier and if you broaden your knowledge you'll see how one house provides a varied flavour palate. The key then is to really understand the cognac in question and then potential offer a flight with chocolates to match and really turn the pairing into an experience.

The Yarra Valley in Australia may be a long way from Yorkshire but there's a Barnsley-born chef doing some seriously innovative stuff down there with gin.

Matt Wilkinson, who owns the Pope Joan eatery in Melbourne and runs the Pie Shop business, has joined forces with the Four Pillars Gin to create some culinary delights using the distillery's spent byproducts and botanicals.

Three years ago, Matt had already hosted a "Gin Pig" dinner at Pope Joan, where he used botanicals to wash a pig with – before smoking the pig over an open fire pit. Inspired by this, and coupled with a passion to reduce food waste and reuse food products, Matt began playing around with the spent ingredients from producers that he admired.

"I got addicted to the spent gin botanicals," said Matt. "There is still great flavor in the spent botanicals and citrus we use in the gin-making, and that for me is a minefield of other opportunities and ways to repurpose them."

Matt has been handed a mission to create a host of innovative products using gin and byproducts of the distilling process used for a variety of different gins, which include whole oranges, Tasmanian pepperberries, lavender and other spices.

Four Pillars has created Gin Pig (where Yarra Valley Berkshire pigs are fed with leftover gin botanicals after a distillation), marmalade made from the oranges that are used to make the gin, gin-washed cheese, chocolate made from gin botanicals, and Christmas puddings made using their Christmas gin which they make once a year.

As well as some awesome ice creams, the next of Matt's ideas to hit shelves will be the Salt & Four Pillars Gin crisps. Yet it's not just food ideas he's developing – smoke pellets, facial cream for men and meat rubs are in the Four Pillars pipeline – oh, and a body scrub.

A Long way from Yorks hire



"We make a 'Metropolitan Negroni' that is jam-pack filled with Coffee beans, and after the maceration process we sent those beans to Frank Body (a well-known coffee bean body scrub brand) and they got made into a Negroni Body Scrub," added Matt. While there's clearly a commercial benefit to these products, sustainability is an equally important driver. "In finding a new way to reutilize the spent botanicals we are lowering the original energy inputs into growing the spices," said Matt.

"Sustainability has always been one of Four Pillars Gin core beliefs. One big venture for Cam Mackenzie (co-founder/head distiller) and I is to potentially dry the botanicals and make cattle feed from them. I have had the used botanicals tested and they have a high amount of minerals. We are also looking into ways of repurposing the water we use to clean the stills."

One of the ingredients in the botanical basket used to make their Navy Strength Gin are finger limes, local to Australia. "They have an incredibly unique flavour but they are quite bitter and we're thinking of trying to make a pilsner lager out of them. Watch this space!"

With his chef's hat on, Matt reckons the favourite dish he's created with the Four Pillars botanicals is the gin-washed and gin-smoked Yarra Valley Salmon Caviar. "It really is amazing and would work on any restaurant menu," added Matt. "I also think we are a first to make Gin Vinegar, using the spent botanicals and potentially the water from washing the still – it's a new, unique product."

In terms of pairing, Matt combined with Jimmy Irvine, Four Pillars Creative Director of Drinks, to come up with a series of gin cocktails to match the food menu used at Matt's Gin Pig dinners and Four Pillars events.

One of note was a cocktail called Purple Yamos, made with Four Pillars Bloody Shiraz Gin, purple yam, whey and citrus. "It's an incredible drink but surprisingly paired brilliantly with 'Gin Pig' pigs in a blanket and baby cucumbers that I had marinated in the spent botanicals then mixed with chilli, sour cream and dill," said Matt.

"I have heaps of ideas and I'd love to get them all into production and out into retail shops but we are taking our time to carefully tailor each one," he added. "We also need to strike the right balance and remember that we make really great GIN first and really good 'Made from Gin' products second."

The 50th anniversary of the Apollo Moon landing has, quite rightly, been the cause of much celebration and commemoration this year.



But amid the widespread hailing of arguably humankind's greatest achievement, few have mentioned that Buzz Aldrin took a bottle of wine to the Moon with him. Yes, he may not have been the first man to walk on the moon, but he was certainly responsible for ensuring there was a bit of an atmosphere up there.

On their return to Earth, the first alcoholic drink Aldrin and Armstrong enjoyed in 1969 was the historic "Moonwalk", a cocktail inspired by their legendary lunar journey. It was sent to them in a flask by Joe Gilmore, the then head barman of The Savoy hotel's American Bar – who received a letter back from Neil Armstrong thanking him and saying it was the first drink they had when they came out of quarantine.

As well as champagne and grapefruit juice, the key component of the cocktail was the iconic French liqueur Grand Marnier, a mix of fine cognacs and distilled essence from wild, tropical oranges. Fifty years on, it is also the fulcrum in the "To the Moon and Back", a commemorative cocktail created by Victor Maggiolo, the senior bartender at The Savoy's Beaufort Bar.

"It's a little twist on the classic "Moonwalk" cocktail and an elegant mix between a spritz and a champagne cocktail," said Victor. "It's a bittersweet combination between Campari, a cordial of rosebuds and grapefruit peel, Grand Marnier, all topped up with Champagne."

It's a drink inspired by both of The Savoy's famous bars – the classic cocktails of the American Bar and the DNA of the Beaufort Bar, born as a champagne bar back in 2010. Victor strongly believes that Grand Marnier has the versatility to be more than something to be simply enjoyed during that after-dinner moment.



"There's a wide array of flavour notes and I think it could be also a great aperitif if paired in a good way," added Victor. "I would go for some aged cheese or also some good charcuterie, something that could balance the sweetness of the liqueur, adding some ice to the liqueur or some kind of bubbles to lengthen would also definitely help."

And what would he pair with the "To the Moon and Back"? "It can be enjoyed as an aperitif, with some fresh seafood, or with some bruschetta with olive oil and chopped cherry tomatoes, Mediterranean style," added Victor.

The Beaufort Bar has placed the pairing of dishes with its beautiful drinks at the forefront of their current menu, which is divided into three sections – "Music", "Magic" and "Drama". "Since I joined the Savoy three years ago, we are putting more and more stress on the importance of serving food according to our drinks – in fact, at the moment we would say that the food is created according to the drinks." Victor and his team worked in tight

collaboration with The Savoy's executive chef, Fabrice Lasnon, to create the menu. "Each section lists cocktails with certain key spirits – we wanted to create three sections with drinks that shared the same flavour profile," added Victor.

In the "Music" section, cocktails made with rum, vodka and bubbles were designed to be light and refreshing in style and accompanied by light dishes such as oysters and caviar. Within the "Drama" section, darker spirits such as cognac and whiskey come to the fore in bode, richer styles that could accommodate bigger food flavours such as a sharing assortment of satays.

When pushed, Victor picked out his favourite pairings: "I like vodka with oyster or caviar but also "The Tempest", a very delicate rum cocktail with notes of Green apples, pears and hints of smoke, that is coming out from drops of Islay peaty whisky: the contrast between the saltiness of the seafood and the sharp freshness of the drink is great!"

Within the "Drama" section, he suggests something smoky too – a cocktail called "Birnam wood": a powerful, smoky, salty drink with an Islay whisky as the main ingredient. "There are some herbal notes coming out from Chartreuse and Seedlip which goes perfectly with the tuna tataki, cutting through the richness and creaminess of it – it's one of my favourite pairings."

Guests, however, are welcome to combine drinks and food from different sections. "Everyone has different palates," added Victor. "I always encourage to pair drinks with food that could enhance their drinking experience, at The Beaufort Bar we have an amazing champagne selection by the glass, and an incredible spirit selection as well. Our bar wants to elevate the guest drinking experience, and food should be functional to that."

TOP

OF THE

POP



Chips are almost incomprehensibly amazing. They combine simplicity with satisfaction like almost no other culinary dish. Are they a 'dish'? Maybe some people see them as side dish. Dunno, either way, they're flippin' brilliant. In case you're not sure of what chips are, they're just potatoes really, cooked in a different way to the other potato styles – you know, like mash, roast, jacket, dauphinoise, bravas, that sort of carry-on. Boiled? No, not boiled please.

Interestingly, the top search on Google for 'chips' offers up the motorcycle cop show CHiPs, which makes Google seem a bit at odds with our own valuation of the chips you eat. The Americans call them fries, which seems strange, but for them chips are crisps, which might explain this Google anomaly. But the Americans are wrong. They are chips. Having said that, chips are fried potato, and they start to appear in early European texts with the note that they are fried potatoes, so fries might be more universal. Regardless, this is just semantics: the point is, chips really are incredible.

The folks at Poptata are already well aware of how important chips are, and they call them fries. Set up in 2015 as a stall at the Portobello Market in London, Poptata's street food spin on fries was the brainchild of Marco Maiocchi and Luca Sammartino. Identifying a gap in the street food offering, they set about peeling and cutting the best potatoes they could source by hand, frying them twice at different temperatures and then adorning them with everything from cheese to smashed avocado, chorizo, chicken and pulled pork. Suddenly they



became the kings of street fries and now have sites in Croydon and Shoreditch Boxparks, Portobello Market and Tooting Market.

What the folks at Poptata have done is realise that as beautiful as chips are, they deserve a little more respect, and as a result they have turned a simple culinary serve into something wonderful, memorable and stand-alone. If you serve chips in your bar, take notes.

It's in the Tooting site that things get more relevant to drink, because it is here that the owners recently opened a bar, proving that perhaps the best thing to have with a portion of chips is a quality cocktail. Named Top of the Pops, the cocktail bar operates upstairs at the Tooting Poptata, offering playful cocktails, craft beers and wines to accompany Poptata's signature premium street fries.

The creative selection of drinks includes a Gin & Tonic trolley as well as cocktails on tap. The tap bar has an espresso Martinis and Aperol spritz, while the signature cocktail menu offers botanical twists on classic cocktails.

Although integrally linked to the success of the fries, Marco created the bar as its own entity. 'The bar has elements of cool urban design with vibrant splashes of colour to enhance its fun and edgy cocktail offering,' he says. 'The central bar is surrounded by copper-finish high stools, as well as an assortment of intimate seated tables, and communal benches for larger groups. Industrial-style fixtures will be offset by a wall of foliage; the aim was to create an Instagram-worthy backdrop to the whole bar.'

'The aim with our approach to drinks was simply Being POP! We don't have to forget our roots and where we are located. We started as a street food business in 2015 and we are located in a street food market, so our menu is POPular but with our twist. To help, the cocktails have been named with influence from the POP ART movement.'

Like any new bar, the spirits selection is important to Marco and his team, and while the fries are crucial, there has to be a common sense consideration of what they stock on the back bar.

Negroncino



Coffee-infused Campari Gin Cocchi Vermouth di Torino

'The spirits research started after an accurate analysis of the demographic of the area,' says Marco. 'We are certainly looked at trends and new products, and want to get a good balance between local and well-known brands without giving up our core values. We see these as being unique while combining simplicity with quality.'

'Gin remains an evergreen trend, so you can't ignore it, but there's an amazing growth in tequila and mezcal sales right now. Meanwhile in south London, spiced rum is a strong product.'

'Low-ABV drinks are on trend, especially at the beginning of the week, and another fast-growing trend that is actually one of our bestsellers is our SPRITZ (Aperol, elderflower and Limoncello).'

Of course, chips are not an entirely unique addition to quality cocktail environments. Years ago Milk and Honey made a point of serving great chips in a very high-profile member bar; then you have the recent opening of the new MEATliquor in the old Match Bar site in London, where again, chips prove the perfect garnish to excellent cocktails.

So, could chips prove to be the ultimate bar snack? Better than nuts, crisps?

'Certainly, yes,' says Marco, 'especially if freshly cut and cooked to order, like we do. Chips are extremely good as well as suitable for everybody, due to an almost zero content of allergens.'

'When it comes to pairing with drinks, we find that bubbly long drinks work very well. They clean out the palate from the oil of the chips and the fat of the cheese.'

'With our Guaca fries (cheesy fries, smashed avocado, halloumi and mild spicy sauce) we would obviously recommend a margarita, but for the halloumi fries it would really depend on the dips. With the banana ketchup it would be something exotic maybe with rum, and with the pink garlic mayo a pink gin spritz, which is very Instagrammable.'

One of the best spirits coming up against fries might be vodka, simply because it is such a clean, pure spirit. Unlike some of the richer meats or spicy vegetarian dishes in the street food world, fries can be more subtle, so the vodka doesn't overpower any flavours. The Girlie Door cocktail on Marco's menu is a great case in point, mixing Belvedere Vodka, Luxardo Maraschino, pineapple, and Belvoir Raspberry and Rose Cordial.

But whatever your approach to food in the bar, the Poptata story is inspiring evidence that any addition to the menu can earn a place with a cocktail pairing, and as a culinary enthusiast it's no surprise to hear Marco is passionate about aligning great food with drink.

'Generally speaking, food is a must!' he says. 'Think about it. Look what's happening in London in most of the food and market halls, you'll see how the central bar is increasing sales being surrounded by different street food vendors.'

We agree, and even if you're not sure of your food offering, know that a simple serve of chips with great cocktails could help the business.

When in Portobello



Spiced rum Ancho Reyes Ginger beer Angostura bitters



WHISKEY & ANYTHING

Ervin Trykowski spent years honing his craft as a bartender in the best bars, and also set up the Glasgow Bartenders Club. He now works as the global Scotch Whisky Ambassador for Diageo, and here tells us why the spirit is the perfect foil for food.

Scotch whisky has the most diverse flavour profile of any spirit, ranging from light and fruity all the way up to robust smoky. This means that we have a plethora of options when thinking about matching with food, and also means that Scotch whisky can be paired with almost anything.

Taking a whisky style and flavour profile is essential when matching with food. If you are a bartender, tasting a whisky neat is always the best place to start, especially if you are looking to match it with or create a cocktail. A deep understanding of the whisky – not only the flavour notes but finish and texture – is essential if you want to create something world class.

If you are looking to convince a customer on pairing whisky with food, then whether it's neat or with a cocktail serve depends on who you are talking to. I start every pairing event or dinner with a highball: this is a great way to open up the palate and bring people on board who aren't necessarily Scotch whisky drinkers. It's important to bring people into the category, and serving someone a neat 43% Scotch isn't always the best way to go about it. I often start with cocktails and finish with a neat or Scotch on the rocks, and that helps the customer understand the versatility of Scotch.

On the highball serve, I think a simple offering like The Singleton and Soda is vitally important when breaking down misconceptions around whisky. People are too quick to pigeonhole Scotch, and for years we have been telling people how not to drink it; advice like, Don't add ice, don't add water, you certainly never put single malt in a cocktail. But when you serve Scotch with a bit of energy and a bit of excitement in a new way, people tend to get on board. The Singleton and Soda, or highball, is the most important drink for us to bring people into the complicated world of single malt. It bridges the gap between Scotch enthusiasts and complete newcomers: it's still seen by experts as showing Scotch off in a positive way, and it's brought down to an ABV that people who aren't used to drinking neat spirits can get on board with; all at the same time showing off the quality single malt inside.





Beyond the customer, though, one of the most important relationships when pairing whisky with food is obviously between bartender and chef. It can make or break a business but also elevate experiences to new levels if you get it right. Bartenders learn from chefs about the pairing of flavours, but the bartenders can also help chefs understand which Scotch can elevate their drink to the next level. The biggest things we have learned from them are techniques and mise en place. The way bartenders now prepare ingredients wouldn't have happened without the influence of chefs.

For the people who approach whisky and food, the opportunities are endless, and one thing that never fails to amaze me is how the world makes Scotch their own. I was in the Philippines, eating Balut – which definitely falls into the unusual category – and afterwards washed it down with a Singleton and Soda. Not a food pairing I'd jump back to, but it was most certainly an experience. Bartenders should really open up their minds to all possibilities.

But if you feel the customer isn't ready, then recreate that 'Classic Scotch moment' with a twist at the end of a dinner. You can send

out small samples that look like neat Scotch but are actually cocktails. It will surprise people and elevate their experience. What's crucial is to remember that this is why people go out now: it's not for just food and drink any more; it's to experience something they can't do at home.

If you're looking to learn, the best whisky bar in my experience has been Black Rock, in London. Primarily because it's about a whisky menu, it's about the way they describe the spirit and the clever approach to organising whisky in the cabinet. The best whisky menus aren't written down but recited by someone who lives and breathes the spirit. The best whisky bar in the world is The Pot Still, for this very reason: you never know what the guys are going to put in front of you, but it's always an experience.

If you're looking to put whisky on a menu, then don't position your malts geographically but by flavour. Not everyone is born with an understanding of whisky distilleries, regions or complex production methods, but everyone can understand and experience flavour. So just describe what these whiskies remind you of or taste like, and structure the menu around that.

THE PERFECT SERVES

Looking for the ultimate food and whisky pairing, here's what Ervin had to say: 'Talisker with an oyster.'

Sorry for the short answer but it's just perfect.'

But in a bid to expand the repertoire a bit, The Singleton recruited world-famous pastry chef and 'pie king' Calum Franklin for an evening to pair his creations with whisky; the results were stunning and emphasised the versatility of a single malt.

TINNED SALMON & TOAST SANDWICHES

Singleton-whisky-cured salmon and asparagus terrine, topped with pickled shallot rings and caviar, set inside a ring pull tin – sealed and to be opened at the table. Toasted rye miniature bagel and sliced pickled gherkins served to accompany. Vegetarian option: Mediterranean vegetable terrine. Whisky: Served with The Singleton Seaside Soda, made up of Singleton 12YO, chip shop cordial, lemon soda and caperberries.

CURRY PIE & CHIPS

Slow-cooked curried lamb shoulder, onion and potato pie, wrapped in a pithivier-style domed shortcrust pie case, served with a mango salsa and chip shop curry sauce in jugs. Pressed, thinly sliced confit potato chips dusted in salt and vinegar served to accompany. Vegetarian option: curried root vegetable pie. Whisky: The Singleton Trade Route, made up of Balvenie Doublewood 12YO, pineapple and turmeric sugar and Angostura bitters. It comes served in an old-fashioned-style glass with a block of ice.

JELLY & ICE CREAM

Singleton-infused jelly dome (made with vegetarian gelatine) suspending summer berries sat on a hazelnut ice cream and genoise sponge sandwich. The finished dish looks like an edible snow globe, and the jelly wobbles on the top when the plate is moved. Whisky: Singleton Scotch Mist: Glenfiddich 15YO, blackcurrant jelly, tonka ice cream and a delicious aroma.

KETEL ONE CITROEN			40%
£19.01	PER 70CL	VODKA	APERITIF 

According to the saying, when life gives you lemons, you should make lemonade. But that seems to be an acutely unambitious approach – why not do like the Nolet family did, and craft a quality vodka?

Back in 2000, the famous Dutch distilling dynasty created Ketel One Citroen Vodka, a citrus vodka that was a deftly designed departure from those less-authentic alternatives whose ingredients may lack integrity.

The Nolet family, whose distilling heritage dates back more than 300 years, makes this vodka by infusing its flagship vodka with citrus essential oil essence. They use four types of lemons – two from Sicily, which imbue the vodka with a lovely, lively rich sweetness;

one from Spain, which delivers a full, distinctive character; and one from Guinea, West Africa, which injects an intense taste.

Limes also play a part, with the vodka's citrus freshness coming from two varieties sourced from the Caribbean. Both citrus fruits come to the fore on the nose: refreshing sweet lemon zest and a subtle hint of lime.

The palate is beautifully balanced; a touch of tartness followed by freshness, conjuring up strong, freshly cut, zesty lemons amid a full fruit bowl of flavours. Soft in mouthfeel but with a beautiful citrus bite and tang, the finish provides a long and rich lemon custard send-off.

With wheat at its base and distilled in copper stills, each batch of Ketel One Vodka is personally approved by a member of the Nolet family prior to bottling. Acutely authentic and steeped in loads of history and distilling heritage, Ketel One Citroen is magnificent in as a classic martini; but if you're looking for an alternative aperitif, the Andalusian Buck – sharpened with some manzanilla sherry – is a superb yet straightforward serve that will skilfully stimulate the salivary glands ahead of a meal.



ANDALUSIAN BUCK

35ML KETEL ONE CITROEN VODKA

20ML SHERRY

20ML FRESH LIME

TOPPED WITH GINGER SODA & TWO
DASHES OF ORANGE BITTERS

GARNISHED WITH A LEMON WEDGE

1. BUILT IN THE MULE CUP

VILLA ASCENTI			41%
£25.81	PER 70CL	GIN	SUSHI 

Last spring saw drinks giant Diageo strengthen its hand in the gin market with the unleashing of an artisan, Italian gin produced using ingredients from the hills of Piemonte.

Villa Ascenti, a super-premium Italian gin, is created on a Frilli copper pot still from the 1970s that has been refurbished as part of a £360,000 investment that has also seen the building of a brand-new distillery in Santa Vittoria.

The creation of Villa Ascenti is overseen by Master Distiller and locally trained winemaker Lorenzo Rosso, who has more than 20 years of experience working with both the grape and the grain. Lorenzo, born and bred in the Piemonte region in the northwest of Italy, works hand in glove with local producers and farmers to source local ingredients.

Beyond the use of classic botanicals, Villa Ascenti also uses acutely Italian ingredients including Moscato grapes, fresh mint and thyme – and the herbs are hurried into the still within hours of harvesting. The Moscato grapes, meanwhile, are picked in August and September when the fruit is at its best, before undergoing a trio of distillations – the most significant being the final distillation, during which the grapes are infused with Tuscan juniper berries in the Frilli copper pot still.

What comes off the still combines the classic gin flavour profile with the spirit of the Piemonte region. Opening up with lively juniper, mint and thyme on the nose, the palate is straight out of Piemonte with the flavours of those Moscato grapes, synonymous with the region, enhanced by an ABV of 41%. It's fresh, it's light, and it's seriously

smooth with a soft sweetness and a flurry of summer fruit on the finish. Terrific lengthened with tonic and magnificent in a Martini, it can sit on the dinner table in a carafe designed to be shared.

The Villa Ascenti Classico, lengthened with sparkling wine, is an ideal accompaniment to small Italian-style plates, while Villa Ascenti also suits the subtle flavours of sushi...



VILLA ASCENTI CLASSICO (SHARING COCKTAIL)

125ML VILLA ASCENTI GIN

500ML PROSECCO

125ML SODA WATER

A SPLASH OF SYRUP

1. COMBINE THE INGREDIENTS IN A SHARING CARAFE
2. GARNISH WITH FRESH HERBS & GRAPES
3. SERVE OVER PLENTY OF ICE

CRABBIE'S YARDHEAD WHISKY			40%
£15.44	PER 70CL	WHISKY	OYSTERS 

Yardhead Whisky is a modern dram deliberately designed to disrupt the world of Scottish single malts.

The latest addition to the range of whiskies owned by the Edinburgh-based John Crabbie & Co. is an acutely accessible no-aged entrant to a single malt category which, for some consumers, remains aloof, unapproachable and often intimidating.

In an attempt to demystify the single malt whisky category and distance itself from what it regards as a preoccupation with regional provenance, Crabbie's Yardhead has chosen not to unveil the distillery from which it's sourced. But what they do reveal is that it's a Highland single malt Scotch whisky aged in ex-bourbon casks, bottled with maximum drinkability in mind and aimed at twenty-something consumers who drink bourbon and rum.

Elements of both these spirits can be discovered on both the nose

and the palate, with sweet vanilla coming off the American whiskey casks, while fresh fruit, vibrant citrus notes and a rich rum-like mellow finish.

Crabbie's, which is named after a distillery that operated in Leith back in the 1800s, opened the Chain Pier distillery in Edinburgh last year – making it the first new single malt whisky distiller in the Scottish capital for nearly 100 years.

Made specifically for mixing, and aimed at less clichéd whisky-drinking occasions and consumers who have not found their way into whisky, Yardhead joins a Crabbie's range that consists of an eight-year-old Highland single malt, a peated 12-year-old Island malt, and three separate Speyside malts aged for 25, 30 and 40 years respectively.

Halewood has created several Yardhead long drinks and cocktails designed to dovetail with a variety of dishes. A simple Yardhead and

Ginger Beer (aka 'The Sailor's Saviour') suits spicy buffalo chicken wings: the carbonation from the effervescent mixer cleanses the palate while the sweetness of the whisky soothes the spice.

Alternatively, a Yardhead Old Fashioned is a strapping sidekick to a succulent steak, while a Whisky Mac – equal parts ginger wine and Yardhead over ice in a rocks glass – is a classic cocktail that's downright delicious with rich apple pie: the spiced notes of ginger wine complement the sweet/tangy apples and the whisky's malt notes are the perfect match for the oaty crumble.

As an aperitif, though, we particularly like the idea of oysters with a Whisky Sour or, indeed, whisky neat. The brine-y shellfish and the sweet mellow whisky create an intense savoury/sweet balance on the palate.



SAILOR'S SAVIOUR

- 25ML YARDHEAD
- 10ML LIME CORDIAL
- 2x DASHES OF ANGOSTURA BITTERS
- GINGER BEER

1. BUILD IN A TALL GLASS AND GARNISH WITH A LIME WHEEL

GIN SUL			43%
£29.42	PER 50CL	GIN	CURRY 

Earlier this year, the firm behind Jägermeister made its first foray into the UK's thriving super-premium gin market with the launch of Gin Sul.

In an increasingly competitive category, Gin Sul is distinctive in that it boasts a unique dual heritage: it's made using ingredients from Portugal, where founder Stephan Garbe originally came up with the idea, yet is distilled, with trademark Teutonic efficiency, in Germany at the Altona Distillery in Hamburg.

Distilled on a 100-litre copper still in small batches, Gin Sul is aimed unequivocally at the upper end of a UK gin market whose impressive growth is showing little sign of waning. Its quality credentials lie in its ingredients; fresh lemons and hand-picked gum rookrose from

the western Algarve adorn the gin with an uplifting aroma.

Other botanicals include organic juniper, fresh rosemary, coriander, rose blossoms, lavender and cinnamon, while the water is sourced pure from Lüneburg Heath and filtered through ice-age shingle in Germany.

It looks the business too. Gin Sul rocks some serious standout skills on shelf with a distinctive white- glazed and screen-printed stoneware bottle with thick ceramic walls that shield the gin's delicate flavours from troublesome temperature changes and laugh in the face of light-strike.

While the classic gin & tonic has traditionally been enjoyed as an aperitif, the more complex combination of flavoursome gins

like this, twinned with bespoke tonics, lends itself to direct pairings with dishes.

Paired with a dry tonic, a Gin Sul G&T can lift the weighty textures of strong cheese from the palate or even pork and shrimp dumplings. As a salute to gin's historical association with the subcontinent, celebrate its kinship with spicy dishes such as curry – it's got the botanical freshness to slice through the heat and, again, the effervescence to prepare the palate for the next mouthful.

On its own, meanwhile, we suggest the classic combination of Gin Sul, Fever-Tree Premium Indian Tonic Water and a garnish consisting of a sprig of rosemary and a large orange peel spiral – complementing the Mexican bitter oranges in the tonic water.



GIN SUL G&T

50ML GIN SUL

FEVER TREE PREMIUM INDIAN TONIC WATER

LARGE ORANGE PEEL SPIRAL

ROSEMARY SPRIG

1. COMBINE IN A LARGE BALLOON GLASS WITH PLENTY OF ICE



GLENFIDDICH FIRE & CANE			43%
£29.83	PER 70CL	WHISKY	SPICY SAUSAGE 

Glenfiddich is a single malt that deftly strikes a balance between tradition and trailblazing.

While it proudly hails its impressive history, it certainly doesn't want to get stuck there and, in Brian Kinsman, Glenfiddich has a malt master who is constantly coming up with creative innovations. Fire & Cane, launched last year as the fourth expression in the brand's 'Experimental Series, is a complex coming together of smoky and sweet notes.

Previous releases from the ongoing Experimental Series include Glenfiddich Project XX and the IPA Experiment, which was a whisky aged in beer barrels that had previously held hop-forward India Pale Ales.

But for his latest limited-edition Glenfiddich release, Kinsman has married peated whisky and malts matured in bourbon barrels and then finished it in Latin rum casks –

to create an elegant whisky that combines the smokiness of a campfire with a terrific toffee sweetness.

Described as 'the whisky experiment that will divide you', Glenfiddich Fire & Cane is a lightly peated, no-age-statement single malt that's been matured in ex-bourbon casks before being finished in 'Latin-style' rum casks for several months.

Sourced from the Caribbean and South America, the casks held a blended rum that is bigger and bolder than the rum that was used to finish the Glenfiddich 21 Year Old Gran Reserva – which wouldn't have had the strength of flavour to stand up to the smoky peat whisky. With a glorious golden hue, Fire & Cane is a single malt that gently rocks and rolls between that classic peaty campfire character and the mellow molasses sweetness delivered by dark sipping rums.

On the nose, fusing with some sweet fruit notes, there's a float of soft peat, like a distant drifting smoke from a billowing bonfire. The campfire character continues through onto the palate, with oak notes, toffee apple and a bit of seared marshmallow and some sharp green fruit. The smoke then lingers on the finish, before a smooth sweet send-off.

Serve it up as a soothing pairing to some spicy sausages from the BBQ – a combination capable of converting even the most dyed-in-the-wool whisky doubters. While able to hold its own in an Old Fashioned, and lovely lengthened in a highball, Fire & Cane is phenomenal over ice with a torched orange peel.



SMOKY SERVE

35ML GLENFIDDICH FIRE & CANE

ORANGE PEEL

ICE

1. ADD CUBED ICE TO A ROCKS GLASS TO CHILL
2. POUR IN FIRE & CANE
3. FLAME ORANGE PEEL ZEST OVER SERVE

OLD FORESTER			43%
£16.94	PER 70CL	BOURBON	BURGER 

‘Yee’ and indeed ‘hah’. All hail this legendary Louisville ‘slugger’ that comes with a whole load of history behind it.

Old Forester was born back in 1870 when a young pharmaceutical salesman by the name of George Garvin Brown created a high-quality, consistent Kentucky bourbon that would meet the medicinal needs of his customers.

Old Forester was launched as the first ever bourbon to be exclusively available in glass bottles – each one adorned with a promise from Dr William Forrester, a leading physician in Louisville. It read: “This whiskey is produced by us only, and we are responsible for its richness and fine quality. Its elegant flavor is solely due to original fineness developed with care. There is nothing better in the market.”

Its theoretical medicinal properties mean that Old Forester also remains the only bourbon to be distilled pre, during and post Prohibition by the same founding family. It is also the first post-

Prohibition single barrel whiskey released in 1938.

Eighty years later, Old Forester has returned to its original home on the iconic Whiskey Row in Louisville with a new, \$45 million, state-of-the-art distillery – still overseen by the fifth-generation of the Brown family.

They’ve had to make some room for a load of recent industry awards, including Gold at the San Francisco Spirits Competition and a Liquid Gold Award in the latest 2019 edition of Jim Murray’s esteemed Whisky Bible.

Made to the original mash bill of 72% corn, 18% rye and 10% malted barley, Old Forester is twice-distilled, first in a column still, then again using a thumper still. The new whiskey is then transferred to new medium charred oak barrels, which they make themselves, and matured for a minimum of four years.

It’s sweet and spicy, intense yet oh-so accessible with a full-on floral

character, some rich tobacco leaf in there and some smooth vanilla from the barrels – which also give it that solid oaky core. Rich but smooth, it’s a great go-to whiskey for bourbon-forward cocktails, splashed over rocks or simply lengthened in a highball or classic cocktail.

But if you’re looking for something to sit alongside American-style burgers, brisket, ribs and other BBQ dishes then serve up an Old Forester Smash – one of the most popular cocktails of 1850’s America. A sibling to the Cobbler and the Julep, the Smash is a cocktail that works for both those who love whiskey and those who don’t love whiskey ... yet.

It’s a serve that opens up to a multitude of variations, seasonality and trending opportunities – and it’s a fine accompaniment to food, with the caramel sweetness to complement the charred meat and the sharpness to slide through the fatty textures.



OLD FORESTER SMASH

50ML OLD FORESTER 86 PROOF

15ML SUGAR SYRUP 2:1

4 WEDGES LEMON MUDDLED
(OR 20ML FRESH JUICE)

8 MINT LEAVES

1. PLACE ALL THE INGREDIENTS IN YOUR FAVOURITE COCKTAIL SHAKER WITH CUBED ICE
2. SHAKE WELL AND STRAIN INTO A ROCKS GLASS OVER CRUSHED OR CUBED ICE AND GARNISH WITH MINT LEAVES

BOODLES MULBERRY GIN			30%
£19.73	PER 70CL	GIN	GAME 

Ask yourself this: how much do you know about the mulberry? Not much, probably. It crops up in nursery rhymes and is better known as a ‘fabulous’ fashion brand; the mulberry is a frequently overlooked fruit, deep purple in hue, and often mistaken for the loganberry and the common blackberry.

The mulberry is anything but common – in both senses of the word. Not only does it grow less abundantly than its prickly-branched peers (such as the sloe, for example), it can often be found sprouting in the manicured gardens of stately homes, fancy squares, private gardens and old orchards.

The reason why you’ll seldom see them on public streets? Well, historically, planners have not planted them because the falling fruit will stain passers-by. So, now

you know something about the mulberry. You’re welcome.

Anyway, the folk behind the quintessentially English Boodles Gin have made their very own mulberry-flavoured gin as a rather salubrious alternative to classic sloe gins, and – let’s face it – the plethora of flavoured and pink gins that can be seen jostling each other on the back bar.

Boodles, distilled in the UK at G&J Distillers, is an upmarket gin named after the historic and famous Boodle’s Gentlemen’s Club in London. Arguably Britain’s most prestigious gentlemen’s club, it was founded in 1762 by future British prime minister, Lord Shelburne (William Petty), and named after its original – and particularly ascetic – head waiter, Edward Boodle. The original Boodles British Gin was first distilled back in 1845,

only for life to be breathed back into it six years ago using a recipe that, unusually, is bereft of citrus botanicals. The original gin forms the base for this fabulously fruity, autumnal offshoot.

The sweet medley of berries perfectly complements Boodles British Gin’s unique botanicals of rosemary, nutmeg and sage. It’s a fresh interpretation of Sloe gin, a classic British drink that is ripe for rediscovery.

When it comes to food pairings, its berry sweetness and tart balance is gorgeous with game, delicious with duck and, when mixed into a glass of bubbles, moreish with pre-dinner munchies. Equally, if you’re looking to boost your after-dinner spend, serve it up with Stilton as an innovative alternative to port.



BOODLES ROYALE

1 PART BOODLES MULBERRY

3 PARTS CHAMPAGNE

LEMON WHEEL

1. COMBINE IN A LARGE BALLOON GLASS WITH PLENTY OF ICE

HOXTON BANANA RUM			40%
£23.27	PER 50CL	RUM	SIPPING / PUDS 

That the flavoured rum category is in extremely fine fettle will not be news to those in the bar business.

Over the past couple of years, it's been the engine room behind the success of the wider rum category, in which golden, dark and premium rums are showing similarly impressive increases in popularity.

But, as ever with a burgeoning drinks trend, not all the new brands competing in the flavoured rum category could be considered entirely authentic when it comes to their ingredients. If trust and transparency are high on your tick list when it comes to stocking your backbar, then have a look at Hoxton Banana Rum.

Each step of the drink's development, from the production process to the new-look bottle aesthetic, has been designed by none other than Gerry Calabrese, son of the legendary Salvatore 'The Maestro' Calabrese.

Hoxton Banana undertakes an arduous production process involving fresh and dried bananas being macerated for five weeks in a selection of quality Caribbean rums. The blend of authentic rums, aged from between 3 and 8 years, is sourced from Barbados, the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua, and consists mostly of column-still rums, with 15% of the blend represented by pot-still rums.

Unlike more frivolous flavoured rums out there, Hoxton Banana contains no artificial colourings or flavours, and only uses 100% natural ingredients. And it's bottled at 40%ABV; higher than a lot of other competitors entering the category.

If you like bananas, you'll like this – but it doesn't bash you on the bonce with overly big banana flavours. The aromatic banana character is a gentle one, merging nicely with the molasses rum on the nose.

It's the palate that brings the nice and natural big banana notes, there's a touch of tropical fruit, some warm caramel notes and vanilla on the finish. It's off-dry and thankfully doesn't have any of the saccharin sweetness that features in other flavoured rums.

And it's worth remembering that a lot of people like bananas. A lot of people. In fact, 100 billion bananas are eaten every year in the world, making them the fourth most popular agricultural product on the planet.

While Hoxton Banana Rum makes a magnificent twist on a pre-dinner mojito and is a perfect premium party spirit to use in a rum punch, it can also be sipped neat as an accompaniment to a pudding or dessert. The Dark and Banana, especially, works well with banoffee pie and adds some extra oomph to spend per head.



DARK & BANANA


50ML HOXTON BANANA RUM

ADD 250ML BRITVIC GINGER BEER

15ML LIME JUICE

1. POUR BOTH THE RUM AND LIME JUICE INTO A GLASS FILLED WITH ICE
2. TOP WITH GINGER BEER, AND STIR



REDLEG CARAMELISED PINEAPPLE			37.5%
£15.47	PER 70CL	RUM	ICE CREAM 

Looking to spice up your ... erm ... spiced rum range? Then introduce the latest release from RedLeg to your back bar or speed rail. RedLeg Caramelised Pineapple, a premium spiced rum made with caramelised pineapple, has been unleashed into a hugely buoyant flavoured and spiced rum sector that is the engine room of an overall rum category showing impressive growth in the UK.

Now worth more than £1 billion a year, rum is, according to some industry experts, expected to eclipse gin sales by the year 2020 and spiced rum will represent a major chunk of its on-trade success.

Just as the gin boom has branched out into flavours so too has rum – with pineapple rum being a particularly popular variant among both bartenders and, indeed, customers making their first forays into the rum category.

Made with 100% natural pineapple and caramel flavours, this latest release from RedLeg uses the core rum's original combination of oak barrel aged rum infused with Jamaican ginger and vanilla spices. There's an instant aromatic hit of sweet vanilla and pineapple while the palate presents some mellow caramel, a touch of toffee and that superb spicy ginger hit for which RedLeg is renowned.

While pineapple rums have traditionally been associated with tiki culture, they are now being widely used in more complex classic cocktails such as the Old Fashioned and fruit-forward concoctions. Delivering flavour and sweetness, RedLeg Caramelised Pineapple can also conjure up that holiday feeling – a transportive taste of the tropics!

With versatility being very much spiced rum's key virtue, the sweetness of RedLeg

Caramelised Pineapple suits the sipping occasion over ice and is an absolutely delicious drink to accompany desserts – spicing up the spend-per-head in the process.

One of the recommended serves is a simple Pineapple and Tonic, made by adding a double measure of RedLeg Caramelised Pineapple to a Collins glass with ice, a dash of gomme syrup topped with tonic water and a squeeze of lime.

However, with a couple of scoops of ice cream, have it like Hemingway in a daiquiri. It's delicious.



THE PINEAPPLE DAIQUIRI

50ML REDLEG CARAMELISED PINEAPPLE

35ML FRESH LIME JUICE

20ML SUGAR SYRUP

1. POUR THE REDLEG CARAMELISED PINEAPPLE, FRESH LIME JUICE AND SUGAR SYRUP INTO A COCKTAIL SHAKER WITH ICE.

2. SHAKE WELL AND STRAIN INTO A COUPLE GLASS.



SIPSMITH ORANGE & CACAO GIN			40%
£19.37	PER 50CL	GIN	HOT CHOCOLATE 

It's been ten years since Sipsmith was set up in a tiny workshop in Hammersmith by Sam Galsworthy, Jared Brown and Fairfax Hall – it was the first traditional copper distillery in London since 1820.

Over the past few years, Sipsmith has been the flavour-focused flagbearer at the forefront of the remarkable gin renaissance. Still distilled in small batches in West London on a trio of small copper stills, its classic London Dry Gin has developed a loyal bartender following.

In April this year, they unveiled their latest expression at an exclusive 10-year anniversary party following rave reviews from the Sipsmith Sipping Society, a bi-monthly membership where one-of-a-kind,

experimental gins are developed by the expert Sipsmith distilling team and sent out to gin lovers.

Harking back to historical distillation techniques and drawing inspiration from the classic combination of chocolate and orange, it's certainly not a flippant foray into the flavoured-gin category.

While other distillers may dial down the juniper character in their citrus gins, Sipsmith turns it up – with 50% more juniper than its London Dry Gin recipe – before adding liquorice for some sweetness. Then orange blossom and black cardamom are added alongside raw cacao nibs – which conjure up a wonderfully rich dark chocolate character.

That's not all. Before bottling, they lay it down on fresh orange zest to create a lovely, zesty, citrusy gin with a strong juniper thread running through it – providing an entirely different profile from other sweet and fruity gins.

It's a spirit that can straddle the seasons – during the warmer months, it stands up superbly in a Gin & Tonic, simply served long with Fever Tree Indian Tonic Water and garnished with an orange. Alternatively, as autumn arrives and temperatures drop, add some easy additional margin by suggesting 50ml of Sipsmith Orange & Cacao to a Hot Chocolate and garnish with a wedge of Orange. Or maybe a chunk of chocolate.



ZESTY ORANGE G&T

50ML SIPSMITH ORANGE & CACAO GIN

PREMIUM INDIAN TONIC WATER

WHEEL OF ORANGE (TO GARNISH)

1. FILL A THIN-RIMMED HIGHBALL GLASS UP TO THE TOP WITH ICE CUBES
2. ADD 50ML SIPSMITH ORANGE & CACAO GIN
3. TOP WITH A PREMIUM INDIAN TONIC WATER
4. GARNISH WITH AN ORANGE WHEEL

SLANE IRISH WHISKEY			40%
£18.50	PER 70CL	WHISKEY	COLD BREW COFFEE 

Whatever you do, don't mention this in Scotland but, according to the history books, it was the Irish who invented whisk(e)y.

Some centuries later, Scottish distillers stole a march on their Irish counterparts when they embraced the ideas of Aeneas Coffey, the Irish inventor who created a continuous still in 1831. Coffey had patented the idea and taken it to the Irish but they turned him away, preferring the pot still.

The continuous Coffey still was Scotch whisky's springboard for global domination, sending sales soaring at the expense of Irish whiskey – and as anyone who has sat through a performance of Riverdance will know, the Irish decision to reject the column still is one that they've been kicking themselves about ever since.

But now, Irish whiskey is making a stirring comeback. Having reached a nadir back in the 1980s, when there were just two distilleries in

Ireland, the Irish distilling scene now finds itself in fine fettle with more than two dozen whiskey-makers spread across each of the four provinces.

The growth in distilleries has been accompanied by a surge in global sales, rising from 6 million cases (72 million bottles) in 2010 to 10.7 million cases (130 million bottles) in 2018 – with sales of Irish whiskey soon to outrank those of Scotch in America.

At the forefront of this Irish whiskey renaissance is Slane Whiskey, the brainchild of the Conyngham family of Slane, renowned in Ireland for hosting huge rock concerts within the grounds of their family castle.

In association with Bacardi Brown-Forman Brands, father and son Henry and Alex Conyngham have built a state-of-the-art sustainable distillery which has breathed life back into a rich history of whiskey-making in the Boyne Valley.

The award-winning triple-casked Slane Whiskey is a blend of grain and malt whiskeys aged in three different casks – virgin barrels, bourbon barrels from Louisville, and sherry casks from Spain.

This creates a whiskey with lots of depth. Autumnal fruit and caramel, butterscotch and vanilla; brown spice and toasted oak on the nose. Then, on the palate, spice notes segue into sweetness with vanilla and toffee followed by a finish of dried fruits and oak and caramelized sugar.

While whiskey has a well-renowned culinary kinship with dark chocolate and, indeed, cheese, we suggest the best way to enhance the dining occasion with Slane is in the shape of a Slane Cold Brew, a cool, chilled twist on the traditional, margin-boosting, Irish coffee.



SLANE COLD BREW

40ML SLANE IRISH WHISKEY

10ML COFFEE LIQUEUR (OPTIONAL)

10ML CARAMEL MONIN

60ML COLD BREW COFFEE

- 1. SHAKE WITH ICE
- 2. SERVE IN A CAN GLASS OVER ICE
- 3. GARNISH WITH THREE COFFEE BEANS



FRANKLIN & SONS ROSEMARY TONIC WATER ^{WITH} BLACK OLIVE

£ POA

PER 200ML

MIXER

It all used to be so simple: choice within the tonic water market was a basic, binary and, let's face it, rather boring one.

But now, the premium tonic water market is overflowing with innovation, exciting new entrants and bespoke variants designed to be paired with premium spirits from bourbon and tequila to gin and Scotch whisky.

Consequently, there's simply no reason to let your mixer offering go flat. Certainly not from a financial perspective – the premium tonic water market is up 27% by volume and value and is now worth £407m, up from £321m last year.

The market has become more informative and innovative, with consumers becoming more interested in trying new flavours and discovering new elements of their drink that improve the overall experience. They want to become everyday connoisseurs, improving

their knowledge of the brands they drink, from ingredients and flavour pairings to brand history and heritage.

Franklin & Sons finds itself at the forefront of this, and has strengthened its hand in the sector with the newly-released Franklin & Sons Flavour Collection, developed in conjunction with leading industry mixologists.

Coming in four flavours – Rosemary Tonic Water with Black Olive, Rhubarb Tonic Water with Hibiscus, Elderflower Tonic Water with Cucumber, and Pink Grapefruit Tonic Water with Bergamot – the dual flavours set the tonics apart from competitors and grant unlimited opportunities for bars to experiment with the finest gins, spirits and fortified wines.

Providing a mix of sweet and bitter flavours to suit every palate, the range gives consumers

the opportunity to try new combinations, and adds depth and complexity to drinks, whilst enhancing, not masking, the botanicals or profile of the spirits.

The Rosemary Tonic Water with Black Olive is a unique combination that combines savoury elements with a balanced herbal note. It's incredibly versatile in its mixability – delicious when dovetailed with a sweet vermouth and a squeeze of orange, and garnished with a sprig of rosemary and a slice of orange. Serve in a large glass, or a wine glass filled with solid cubed ice for a refreshing, herbaceous highball.

Alternatively, when mixed with Martini Bianco, orgeat, lemon bitters and prosecco, Franklin & Sons Rosemary Tonic Water with Black Olive creates a sophisticated, refreshing Aperitivo – perfect with pre-prandial nibbles such as olives, bread sticks, crostini, tapenade and other appetite-stimulating starters.



ROSEMARY BY ANY OTHER NAME

40ML DRY VERMOUTH

10ML LEMON JUICE

10ML TRIPLE SEC

TOP WITH FRANKLIN & SONS

ROSEMARY TONIC WATER WITH BLACK OLIVE

GARNISH WITH ROSEMARY AND BLACK OLIVES.

1. COMBINE IN A LARGE BALLOON GLASS WITH PLENTY OF ICE

