

BEVERAGE AUTHORITY

September 2008 ~ Volume 7, Issue 9

manage. serve. profit.

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THE BIG PICTURE

What Do Your Guests Really Want?



The most deceptive thing about change is the nearly imperceptible pace at which it happens. Such is the case with shifts in consumer preferences. For example, what people liked to drink in bars five years ago has changed. How much it's changed and in what ways is an important business consideration. The products and drinks once popular may no longer be so now.

Next Level Marketing conducted an extensive on-line consumer study for Cheers Magazine and 2,260 people who frequent casual restaurants participated. We uncovered a number of significant consumer trends that throw light onto the question of what people want to drink. For example, 60 percent of the respondents—more than half of whom were women—told us that they “usually to always” order a beverage alcohol drink when they go out for dinner.

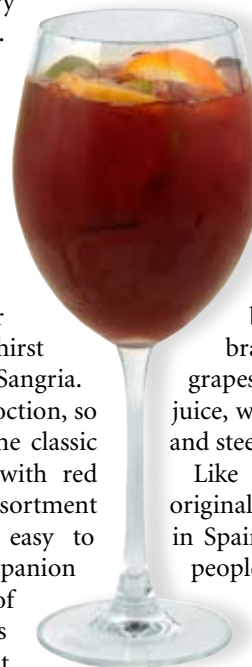
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SPOTLIGHT ON COCKTAILS

Sangria—Summer's Ultimate Libation

Between the thinning ozone and rising temperatures, this country is developing a palpable thirst. And to be honest, we're a nation that gets cranky when parched. On those summer nights when the A/C isn't cutting it, Manhattan-based consultant Jerri Banks advises you seek the sanctuary of Sangria.

“Seriously, it's difficult for me to imagine anything more thirst quenching and delicious than Sangria. Best of all, it's a forgiving concoction, so you can't go too far wrong. The classic punch is traditionally made with red wine, fresh fruit and a wide assortment of spirits and liqueurs. It's easy to prepare and a perfect companion for light summer fare, all of which explains why Sangrias are now becoming so popular at tapas bars and Latin restaurants everywhere.”



A seasoned mixologist with what amounts to a post-graduate degree on the subject, Banks often prepares her Sangrias with white wine instead of red. As evidence, she produced the recipe for a concoction appropriately called *Sangria Blanc* that she says has wowed many a crowd. In addition to dry white wine, Bank's thirst buster is constructed with pisco brandy, cardamom seeds, green grapes, lemon thyme and fresh lemon juice, which she combines in a container and steeps refrigerated overnight.

Like most Americans, Sangria is not originally from these parts. It originated in Spain and Portugal as a drink of the people, a celebration of summer. It made its U.S. debut in 1905 in Ybor City, a historic community just outside of Tampa. That year the family-owned *Columbia Restaurant* opened its doors serving up

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Rémy Martin's Luxury Marques

Nobility. It's the one word that best describes the stature of *Rémy Martin Cognac*. Established in 1724, the firm's lineage and uncompromised quality have made Rémy Martin one of the preeminent cognac houses and among the most respected names in the international community of spirits.

The sales of Rémy Martin Cognac in the United States continue to outpace the category. The prestigious

brand exclusively features Fine Champagne cognacs, highly esteemed assemblages comprised solely of eaux-de-vie obtained from the Grande and Petite Champagne regions. Rémy Martin is the only major cognac house that continues to only distill on the lees; a technique in which the grape skins, pips and stems are included in distillation that arguably yields spirits with a greater range of complexity.



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The Senior Class Of Añejos

After more than six long years of deliberation, the CRT has created the designation of Extra Añejo, which signifies that a 100% agave tequila has been aged for three-years or more. For generations these ultra-luxurious spirits were reserved for the private use of the maestro tequilero and family, but now any commoner with a few extra hundred dollar bills in their pocket can afford what many consider the epitome of the craft.

Introduced in 1995, hand-crafted *Herradura Selección Suprema* is an estate-produced masterpiece aged 49-months in select white oak barrels. Production of Selección Suprema is limited to less than 2,000 bottles a year, which partially accounts for the \$250 price tag. With its wafting floral bouquet and bakery-fresh flavors, Herradura's famed extra añejo is a celebration of style, an homage to the terroir of Amatitán.

Also making its American debut in 1995 was vintage-dated *Jose Cuervo Reserva de la Familia*. The extra añejo is crafted from a blend of the finest aged tequilas in their



cellars, all of which have been matured for a minimum of 3-years in both new charred French and American oak barrels. Reserva is an engaging spirit with a lustrous amber color, generous bouquet and a spicy, oaky palate that gradually subsides into a cognac-like finish. Underscoring its artisan nature, Reserva de la Familia is bottled, labeled, numbered and sealed in wax by hand.

By the time 1996 rolled around, Americans in droves were trading in their shot glasses for brandy snifters. Salt and limes were soon discarded and as a nation we've never looked back.

Many of the perennial heavyweights in this category hail from the rugged highlands of Jalisco, among them is *El Tesoro de Don Felipe Paradiso*, a blend of aged tequilas that are finished in ex-cognac casks, the effect of which can be appreciated throughout its sultry character. If ingenuity is the mother of invention, then Paradiso is pure genius.

Equally exquisite is *Don Julio 1942*, an ultra-premium made at La Primavera

distillery under the supervision of legendary tequilero, Don Julio Gonzalez Estrada. The extra añejo spends a minimum of three-years in oak, during which it develops a satiny, medium-weight body and the enticing flavors of vanilla, fruit and toasty oak. The lingering finish is sweet and sublime.

The world's bestselling brand of 100% agave tequila recently launched its most inspired and compelling marque to date, *Gran Patrón Burdeos*. Debuting at around \$500, Burdeos is made from a blend of añejos aged more than a year in American and French oak. The tequila is then transferred to ex-Bordeaux barrels and further matured for a year or more. Over time the tequila develops lightly spiced, floral and fruity aromas and a captivating palate of nutty and wine-induced flavors. The finish is long and thoroughly satisfying. Be fully prepared to be impressed.

Hacienda Los Camachines has extended its range of tequilas with the release of *Gran Centenario Leyenda Extra*, a seductive añejo aged for an average of four-years in French Limousin oak. To enhance the depth and complexity of Leyenda's blend, the maestro

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“ONE MORE THING. . .” by Robert Plotkin

Tips From the Pros: Cost-Free Ideas Everyone Can Use

- **Bartending Schedules**— Typically bartenders are scheduled to work on a weekly basis. But why not schedule the staff two weeks in advance instead? Bi-monthly scheduling allows bartenders and food servers to better anticipate scheduling conflicts that may arise and more effectively plan their time away from work. A quasi-permanent schedule also helps bartenders generate a much sought-after “following.”
- **Priority Service**— If a food server and a guest approach the bar at the same time, who should the bartender wait on first? While it may sound inhospitable, most restaurateurs instruct their bartenders that when it's busy they're to politely indicate to the guest that he will be right there and prepare a server's drink order first. If handled tactfully, people are usually glad to wait a minute before ordering. On the other hand, the kitchen operates on tight time schedules and a bottleneck at the bar can result in costly delays on the line and on the floor.
- **Eyeing the Merchandise**— Holding a glass to the light and giving it a final visual inspection before committing a drink to it is the mark of a conscientious bartender. Sure, the practice requires a few extra seconds, yet failing to do so runs the risk of serving guests drinks in chipped, cracked, spotted or dirty glassware. Needless to say, that can't be permitted to happen.
- **Consistent Cocktail Servings**— When preparing an order containing two of the same cocktails, care should be taken to ensure that both contain the same serving portion. Otherwise one of the guests is going to feel slighted. Here's what you do. Pour the first cocktail halfway, and then do the same with the second drink. Pour small amounts of the chilled cocktail into each glass, and continue pouring into each until the mixing glass is empty. In this way the serving portion in each glass should be identical.
- **Serving Doubles**— Where is it written that a bar needs to serve doubles? Any way you look at it, doubles are more than twice as potent as a regularly portioned drink. Compounding the problem is that people typically consume them at the same rate as regularly prepared drinks, which increases how quickly the alcohol is absorbed into the person's bloodstream. Be forewarned, the likelihood of experiencing a problem with someone drinking doubles is almost a certainty.

Popping the Top Off the World of Sodas

They're effervescent, flavorful and Americans love them. Sodas and carbonated beverages play an integral part of everyday life in this country. Imagine an office building or public venue without a soda vending machine. Not a chance; it could incite mayhem.

No one need convince Nick Catenella how popular sodas are. He's the managing partner of *Bertolini's*, a chic and authentic trattoria located in the Forum Shops of Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas. At a restaurant where cappuccinos, lattes and espresso rule supreme, Italian sodas are have recently been surging in sales at Bertolini's. These effervescent gems are slightly sweet iced drinks made with club soda, 3 oz. of Monin syrup and a float of whipping cream.

"We serve our Italian sodas in classic 14 oz. pilsner glasses. The drinks are not only extraordinarily delicious, they're attractive and highly marketable," says Catenella. "We've created table cards to promote the Italian sodas with a picture of the drinks and a listing of the flavor options. We also market them in our food menu. It's really impressive how well they sell."

A part of the Morton's Restaurant Group, the fare at Bertolini's offers the estimated 45,000 people a day who stroll by the venue upscale brick oven fired pizzas, clam linguini and chicken scaloppini. Catenella estimates that Bertolini's sells 1,000 to 1,500 Italian sodas a month, up to 2,000 in

the summer months. Favorite flavors include cherry, grape, piña colada and raspberry. Reasonably priced at \$4.25, they represent a sizeable revenue source.

Creating Soda Pop Classics

Among the advantages to marketing Italian sodas is their simplicity and creative potential. The concoction is little more than ice, soda water and a measure of one or more flavoring syrups; brands such as Monin and Torani. The delicate flavoring dissolves immediately into the seltzer, transforming it into a marvelously light soda. Flavored syrups are readily available in different flavors ranging from fruits and spice, to nuts and classic dessert recreations.

While Italian sodas are typically prepared with a single flavored syrup, an effortless way of devising an alcohol-free smash is to use syrups in combination. Classic taste pairings include kiwi/lime, watermelon/blueberry or coffee/chocolate, although these barely scratch the surface of what's possible. Some may want to also upgrade the water used in the drink from club soda to bottled mineral water,



such as San Pelligrino and Perrier.

The specialty Italian sodas at Bertolini's are topped with a layer of whipping cream, which sweetens, adds substance and greatly enhances the drink's appearance. "Our guests use the long straws to gently swirl the whipping cream into their drinks. It's fun to do and creates a great looking drink," adds Catenella.

Another creative twist is hoisting a heaping scoop of vanilla ice cream or lemon sorbet into the concoction. The melding of cold, creamy ice cream or sorbet and flavor-charged soda make an *Italian Float* a sublime experience.

Fortunately for us, Italian sodas know no creative limitations. The *Italian Cream Soda* is made with equal parts of passion fruit and watermelon syrups, a fill with a highly carbonated mineral water—Perrier fits the bill—and a heaping scoop of French vanilla ice cream. Try pairing a soda made with black cherry syrup with a layer of raspberry sorbet or a coffee-flavored soda presented with vanilla ice cream.

Whether judged on taste, panache or profit margin, Italian sodas are one of the finest things drunk through a straw. ♦

PRODUCT PROFILE *continued from page 1*



The constituent elements are aged between 10- and 37-years in seasoned Limousin oak barrels and receive further aging after blending to allow the cognacs in the assemblage to fully integrate.

Rémy XO Excellence is a rare and sublime pleasure. The cognac has an alluring mahogany hue with gold highlights and a wafting bouquet of cinnamon, oranges, plums and subtle floral notes. The light, velvety body delivers waves of delectable spicy, ripe fruit flavors that persist remarkably long on the palate.

Another of the firm's benchmark expressions is *Rémy Martin V.S.O.P Fine*

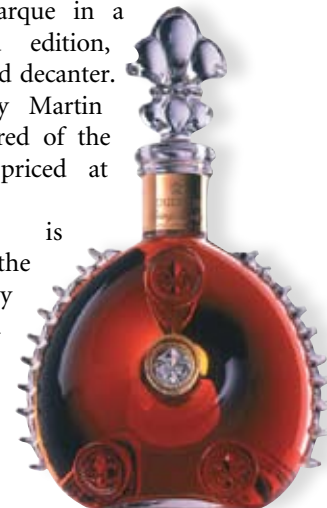
Champagne Cognac. Introduced in 1927, the blend used for the famous marque is comprised of 240 cognacs that are aged between 4- and 14-years. Rémy Martin dominates the American market at the V.S.O.P grade with a 70% share. The marque recently underwent a packaging update, with a redesigned label and a modified bottle shape.

The incomparable top-end of the Rémy Martin portfolio is loaded with talent. *Rémy Martin Extra*, a distinguished and critically acclaimed cognac whose constituent eaux-de-vie have been barrel-aged a minimum of between 20- and 50-years.

The altogether exquisite *Louis XIII de Rémy Martin Grande Champagne Cognac* is deserving of its status as the world's most recognized ultra-premium spirit. The youngest eau-de-vie in its rare

and celebrated assemblage registers a half-century in age. Presented in Baccarat crystal, Louis XIII de Rémy Martin appropriately retails for \$1,300 per 750ml. For a few dollars more, you can purchase the luxurious marque in a beautiful limited edition, diamond-encrusted decanter. Every year Rémy Martin produces a hundred of the special bottling priced at \$10,000 each.

The brand is imported into the United States by Rémy Cointreau USA. ♦



Does Your Backbar Have an Achilles Heel?

There are those of us demented souls who would rather stare at a magnificent backbar than gaze upon an artistic masterpiece or the Grand Canyon. Granted, it makes us rather limited conversationalists, but on the other hand, we've gained insights into the marketing of spirits that you may find interesting.

There is a commonality to be found in nearly every backbar in the country, namely that each contains products that shouldn't be on their shelves. In a perfect world, a beverage operation would have an unlimited amount of shelf space upon which to market liquors and liqueurs. This however, is far from a perfect world, and operators have just so much linear shelf space to display inventory.

There are several things to consider the next time you sit at your bar and look at the products you're marketing to the public. First, scan the backbar for dead stock, which can be loosely defined as a product that take more than 6-9 months to deplete. If it sits on your backbar that long, it's generally considered a bad financial investment. Even worse, dead

stock takes up precious space that could be put to much better use, such as the marketing of new and exciting brands. The backbar is prime commercial real estate; too valuable to be squandered on unpopular merchandise.

There are other reasons to get rid of dead stock. With the passage of time these products begin to get a dirty and dingy appearance. Their labels get stained and start looking tattered, which is not exactly the enticing appearance you're hoping they portray.

So what should you do with the dead stock? Let's face it, this is going to be something of a challenge, in as much as the reason they haven't sold is that they are probably unpopular and out of step with contemporary tastes.

There are two options. The first is to devise specialty drinks that use the products in their recipes. Even Rock & Rye, apricot brandy and root beer schnapps can be made appetizing in the right vehicle.

If that's not viable, the other alternative is to take the products in question off

the backbar and store them in the liquor room until fate or inspiration intervenes. On the surface this may seem like a bad idea. How can you deplete the items if they're sitting in the storeroom? The answer to the objection is that you're not selling the products anyway, so get them off the backbar and make room for brands that will sell.

Whether you bleed off dead stock in a punch at the annual Christmas party, or use it to dissolve clogged drains, any course of action that gets the products off the backbar is preferable to leaving them behind the bar.

You can learn a lot by looking at a back bar. What shape is yours in these days? ♦



THE BIG PICTURE *continued from page 1*

Equally important is what type of beverages they said they prefer drinking. The largest group—22 percent—responded that they like to socialize with cocktails and spirits, compared with 19 percent who said that they are primarily beer drinkers and 11 percent who drink wine. Of interest also is how the consumers responded when asked how many drinks they order per occasion. Over 80 percent responded that they stop after the second drink, while 32 percent said that they hold after the first.

It doesn't come as a surprise that 78 percent of the respondents said that they enjoy drinking alcohol with dinner. Over 40 percent of the consumers said that they drink alcohol before dinner, while 29 percent said they order drinks after the meal. Only 13 percent of people say they will order alcohol with lunch.

Drinking alcohol is exceedingly popular when people are celebrating special occasions (73 percent), relaxing and socializing with friends (69 percent), having a romantic meal (68 percent) or just hanging out with pals (61 percent). The percentage of people who drink

alcohol at a family meal drops to 40 percent and down to 24 percent when it's a quick meal with family or friends. Over 50 percent of the consumers reported that they prefer drinking spirits or cocktails when celebrating a special occasion. In contrast, 30 percent prefer drinking wine at special events, 16 percent choose beer and 2 percent abstain.



When the type of occasion changes, so do consumer preferences regarding what to drink. For instance, at a relaxed, leisurely dinner, the percentage of people who prefer drinking spirits/cocktails, beer and wine are nearly identical at 32 percent, while when socializing with friends, nearly half responded that they prefer drinking

spirits and cocktails, compared with 32 percent who prefer wine and 14 percent beer. At a romantic or intimate meal, more than half of the people said that they prefer sipping wine, while a third said spirits or cocktails.

One last interesting glimpse into the collective minds of your guests. When not socializing with alcohol, 42 percent of the respondents said that they would be interested in ordering alcohol-free beverages priced up to \$4.00. There has been a steady increase in the acceptance of beverages without alcohol.

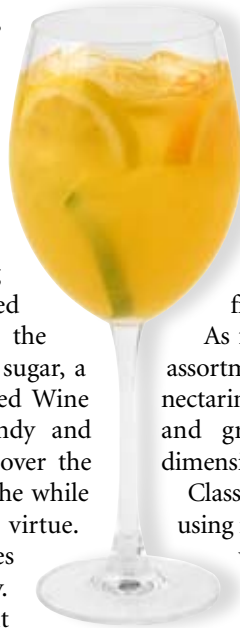
Shifting consumer trends inevitably leads to changing sales mixes. The sales relationship between categories—such as spirits, wine and beer—and the sales relationships between comparable brands is an aspect of the business that deserves careful and regular scrutiny. It affects both the revenue side of the profit equation, as well as the cost side.

Mike Ginley
Next Level Marketing

authentic Spanish and Cuban cuisine and pitchers of icy cold Sangria prepared fresh at tableside. All were a smash hit.

While now considerably larger, the Columbia Restaurant continues to flourish in the same location on 7th Avenue with the same family at the helm. On a recent visit, staffer Sebastian Herrera deftly prepared for our table a pitcher of Columbia's now famous **Sangria Y Toro**. Working on a clothed cart, he quartered a lemon and orange, squeezed the juice into an iced pitcher, added sugar, a split of Torres Sangre Spanish Red Wine and a healthy measure of brandy and orange liqueur. Sebastian doted over the concoction, stirring it gently, all the while reminding us that patience is a virtue. After a few banter-filled minutes the Sangria was pronounced ready.

It was immediately apparent he was right. Its succulent, fresh fruit bouquet was intoxicating, a lavish affair accentuated with spicy, oaky notes of brandy. That the Sangria was delicious goes without saying. What does merit mentioning is that none of us have been thirsty since.



Steeping Like Pros

Sangria is marvelously accommodating, its creative range only limited by the availability of fresh produce. Most seasonal fruits are well cast in the lead roles, especially lemons, limes, oranges and grapefruit. Their high acidity will balance the drink's natural sweetness and keep the other fruit in the mix from discoloring.

As for the rest of the crew, a varied assortment of apples, pears, peaches, nectarines, blackberries, strawberries and grapes are enlisted for added dimension, fragrance and color contrast.

Classically styled Sangria is made using red wine, with the famed Spanish wines from Rioja or Penedes being traditional selections. Dry, big-bodied California Zinfandels or Cabernet Sauvignons are also equal to the task. In a supporting role, Champagnes and sparkling wine are often added for a splash of effervescence. The choice of wines is entirely a matter of personal preference.

Nacional 27 in Chicago promotes a delectable **White Sangria** concocted with South American Chardonnay and a bracer of Peruvian pisco brandy. The **Pomegranate & Peach Sangria** at Houston's **Backstreet Café** is a blend of pomegranate juice, fresh pureed peaches, guava nectar, orange juice, Cointreau and New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc.

At the end of the process, after all of the disparate ingredients have been added, the only thing left to do is place the container of Sangria in the refrigerator and let it steep overnight. This will allow the flavors of the wine, fruit and spirits time to fully integrate.

And when that happens, Columbia's Herrera contends, "Sangria is heavenly." ♦



SAFEGUARDING YOUR PROFITS *continued from page 2*

tequilero adds rare reserve añejos selected from the Hacienda's cellars. The result is a world-class tequila with a dark amber color, aromas of vanilla, clove and oak and a long, flavorful finish.

Award-winning **Milagro Select Barrel Reserve Añejo** is triple-distilled exclusively from estate-grown agaves, and aged no less than three-years in new French oak barrels. The ultra-sophisticated extra añejo has a voluptuous body and a bouquet brimming with oaky, peppery and herbaceous aromas. The tequila quickly fills the mouth with the appetizing flavors of toffee, honey and vanilla with delightfully spicy notes; all of which linger on the palate for an impressively long time.

Partida is the fastest growing brand of premium tequila in the country, and recently released **Partida Elegante** will only further their popularity. Elegante is distilled entirely from estate-grown agaves and matured in American oak barrels for 36-to 40-months. It has a radiant golden hue, captivating layers of dry spicy flavors and a long memorable finish. Elegante is too good to share with the in-laws.

Another brand on the charts with a bullet is 4 Copas, a masterfully crafted range of 100% agave tequilas. Made in the lowlands of Jalisco, **4 Copas Extra Añejo** is distilled using certified organic agaves and matured for a minimum of 54-months in American white oak. The thoroughly enjoyable añejo retails for under \$200, which makes it an affordable slice of heaven. Created in 1996 by ex-Van Halen rocker Sammy Hagar, super-premium Cabo Wabo 100% agave tequilas have generated considerable excitement in their brief, yet illustrious careers. Fans of the brand will delight in **Cabo Uno Añejo Reserva**, an extra añejo aged 38-months in both French and American oak barrels. Limited in production to only 1,800 cases a year; the tequila has an herbal and spice bouquet, a dry, full palate and a slightly smoky finish.

Sipping any one of these spectacular añejos reinforces why so many people are enamored with tequila. We should all have futures as bright. ♦

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September 2008 – Volume 7, Issue 9

©Liquid Enterprises 2008

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Gourmet Sangrias For Summer

Living a stone's throw from the North African coast, the Spanish know a thing or two about slaking thirst. For generations the answer to the oppressive heat has been Sangria, an irresistibly delicious drink with so much creative potential that growing tired of it is quite impossible. Swirling together wine, juice, fresh fruit, spirits and liqueurs creates its mélange of vibrant flavors. Here are a few Sangria recipes to whet your whistle. ♦

Sangria Blanc

(makes 10-12 servings)

Specialty of Jerri Banks, New York, NY

64 oz. White Wine (drier is better)

13 oz. Pisco Brandy

1/8 cup cardamom seeds

1 cup green grapes, crushed

1 lemon, cut in 1/4 in. slices

4-5 sprigs lemon thyme

2 oz. fresh lemon juice

4 oz. simple syrup

Combine all of the ingredients in a container and let steep in refrigerator for about 24 hours. Prior to serving, strain off most of the solids, leaving some to remain in the Sangria for visual effect. Serve chilled from a glass pitcher into tumblers or wine glasses. Garnish with fresh berry skewers.

Pomegranate & Peach White Sangria

(makes 6-10 servings)

Specialty of Backstreet Cafe, Houston, TX

26 oz. New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc

8 oz. Cointreau

8 oz. pomegranate juice

7 oz. pureed fresh peaches

6 oz. guava nectar

4 oz. fresh orange juice

2 oz. simple syrup

1 peach, cut into slices

1 orange, cut into slices

1 lime, cut into slices

Combine the ingredients—except sliced peaches—in a container and let steep in refrigerator overnight. Prior to serving, add in the sliced peaches, stir thoroughly and transfer to a pitcher. Serve over ice and garnish with freshly cut fruit.

Rosemary's Red Sangria

(makes 12-14 servings)

Specialty of Rosemary's, Las Vegas, NV

50 oz. Dry Red Wine (light- to medium-bodied)

13 oz. Dry Sparkling Wine

10 oz. Brandy

4 oz. fresh lime juice

4 oz. ruby red grapefruit juice

4 oz. pomegranate juice

6 oz. simple syrup

16 oz. fresh orange juice

Combine all of the ingredients in a container and let steep in refrigerator overnight. Prior to serving, stir thoroughly and transfer to a pitcher. Serve over ice and garnish with fresh orange slices, grapes and lime wedges.

Nacional 27 White Sangria

(makes 10-12 servings)

Specialty of Nacional 27, Chicago, IL

58 oz. South American Sauvignon Blanc

9 oz. DeKuyper Peachtree Schnapps

5 oz. Pisco Brandy

3 oz. simple syrup

6 oz. fresh lemon juice

3 cinnamon sticks

2 naval oranges

2 Granny Smith apples

Splash of San Pellegrino Water

Combine the ingredients—except the San Pellegrino—in a container and let steep in refrigerator for about 24 hours. Prior to serving, stir thoroughly, and transfer to a pitcher. Serve over ice in a wine glass, add a healthy splash of San Pellegrino, and garnish with an orange wedge.

Questions for the Seasoned Pro

The best thing about trivia is finding what those around you don't know yet. Then, regardless of whether you knew the answers, you can act superior when your pals are stumped. "Huh, I thought for sure you'd know that." You can choose to be more mature than that, but why? To that end, here is this month's trivia quiz.

1. This amber beer is a hybrid made from both top- and bottom-fermenting yeasts; it is only made in San Francisco.
2. This whiskey by Wild Turkey is 110-proof, undiluted and unfiltered single cask bourbon.
3. This yellow-hued, aromatic vodka is only produced in eastern Poland and flavored with rare species of grass from which it derives its name.
4. What rum did Paul Revere quaff after his famous Midnight ride?
5. Aged 15-years, this label is the rarest of the Chartreuse liqueurs.
6. What is the principal flavor of the French liqueur, Crème de Noisette?
7. What is Himbeergeist?
8. What is the flavor of Goldwasser?
9. What creamy thick liqueur is made from egg yolks, sugar and brandy?
10. Oude and Jong are styles of this type of gin.

Genever gin

10. Oude and "Jonge" are styles of

9. Advokat

from coriander.

8. Goldwasser derives its predominant flavor

raspberry liqueur.

7. Himbeergeist is an eastern European

6. Hazelnut

5. Chartreuse V.E.P Liqueur

4. Old Medford New England Rum

3. Zubrówka Polish Vodka

2. Wild Turkey Rare Breed Bourbon

Brewing Company

1. Anchor Steam; sole domain of Anchor

ANSWERS



Bottled Purees Can Be Heavenly

In a perfect world, all the fruit you could ever want to use when making cocktails would invariably be in season and grow right down the road. Without exception, it would always be at the peak of ripeness, and taste and smell luscious. The unfortunate reality is that nothing's perfect—nature and the international food supply included.

Therein lie the limitations of relying on fresh fruit behind the bar. Seasonality and availability issues can create havoc with drink consistency, such that at times the whole fruit contribute little in the way of aroma or flavor to a cocktail, bad news for guests who come in on an off night. Fresh ingredients are no guarantee of better drinks.

Nowhere is this more apparent than with one of the mainstays of mixology, fruit purees. Designed to quickly deliver a concentrated blast of fresh fruit flavor, purees are now used when preparing creative variations of many classic cocktails from *Mojitos*, *Martinis* and *Margaritas*, to *Daiquiris Sangrias* and many of the *Tiki drinks* now coming back into fashion.

Purees are made by blending fruit and lemon sour mix until it's attained a thick, milkshake-like consistency. Ah, but if you've ever made the attempt, then you likely already know that fresh fruit often results in a puree with little flavor and a faintly colored appearance, both of which essentially renders it unsuitable for drink making. For example, it's been my experience that strawberry puree prepared with frozen berries packaged in a flavor-

and color-enhanced syrup yields a better puree for making drinks than one made with fresh fruit alone. It's a paradox, yet such is the case.

Fresh fruit purees pose another operational concern. Their lack of preservatives creates the potential for microbiological contamination and foodborne illnesses, which necessitates they be handled as highly perishable products. Detecting that they've turned bad isn't readily apparent, which only compounds matters. Fresh fruit purees must be refrigerated between each use and cannot be kept at the bartender's workstation. Their back-ups must be dated and rotated such that the first prepared is the first used. Even this doesn't ensure a rancid puree won't mistakenly be served to a guest.

Nature Enhanced

Although seemingly a contradiction, the practical reality is that prepared fruit purees provide a viable platform upon which to base a large part of a "fresh" drink program. Collectively they offer beverage operators a host of benefits that are difficult to ignore, not the least of which is shelf-stability. Considering the crucial role preservatives play in foodservice, operating without this most basic type of protection is problematic at best.

The impeccable quality of premium bottled purees can in part be attributed to an ever-expanding global economy and

technological know-how. The fruit used in the purees of category leader *Finest Call*, for example, are prepared from specific varieties from a well-established growing region. Exacting specifications are maintained throughout the process to ensure uncompromised quality and that the fruit is at peak ripeness.

Factor in the operational benefits of uninterrupted availability, volume discounting and a selection that rivals your neighborhood market and prepared fruit purees begin to look better all the time.

Like most things, not all brands of prepared purees are created equally. Even before doing a taste test, check each brand's ingredients. The most telling item is the percentage and composition of the fruit base. Some manufacturers add less expensive juice—such as grape, pear and apple—to bolster their fruit content. Premier brands are made only with the type of fruit specified on the label.

Next, evaluate each puree in a horizontal format, judging them for taste, color, aroma, mouthfeel and finish. The last step is to sample the puree featured in its intended drink application. Those that withstand the scrutiny are bona-fide keepers.

The "fresh" movement in mixology is about creating cocktails that exude vitality and sun-drenched exuberance. Having done nature one better, shelf-stable fruit purees allow you to fully deliver on the promise of "fresh" without the attendant hassles. That's a win-win. ♦

PRODUCT PROFILE

Mango Puree of Royal Descent

Mangos aren't from 'round these parts, yet the succulent fruit has struck a resonant chord with Americans, making it one of the hottest, most in-demand flavors on the market. It's a pity that mangos don't come with an owner's manual because these tropical hotties are not user-friendly. They're fibrous beasts with hairy, ill-mannered seeds that make prepping mangos an aerobic activity.

For those times when wrestling with a gaggle of

fruit just doesn't sound like fun, the clear-cut "fresh" option is *Finest Call Mango Puree*. Not only does it have the highest fruit content in the shelf-stable class, but it's made exclusively with Alphonso mangos from India; a variety dubbed the "King" because of its lush flavor and atypically high levels of sugar.

The clincher was a side-by-side comparison between *Finest Call Mango Puree* and my field-tested favorite. At best, the scratch version was almost as good as theirs and it was made with freshly cut mango. I realized that in an hour or so their shelf-stable product would easily trump mine in color, aroma and depth of flavor.

Bottom line—*Finest Call Mango Puree* has a gorgeous appearance, sensual texture and tastes like paradise. ♦

