

MOCKED

UP CATCHING THE LATEST BUZZ ON THE NONALCOHOLIC COCKTAIL CRAZE

by Dani Friedland

Be it for health reasons or a way to stay focused at a business lunch, the demand for nonalcoholic cocktails has seen a sobering spike. And teetotalers have found more than iced tea and soda to sip, as mixologists are making drinks as interesting as their boozy cousins.

At Spark in Provo, Utah, Owner Blake Ballard's entire beverage menu is nonalcoholic in a nod to the preferences of the local community. Ballard says he can give them more interesting options than the virgin piña colada they can get anywhere.

His menu ranges from a Shirley Temple with cotton candy to the pomegranate (\$3.50, recipe, plateonline.com) with lime juice, pomegranate and tarragon.

At Los Angeles' Eva, bartender Lance Stacy has strawberry mojito (\$7, recipe, plateonline.com) on his mocktail menu. "When you drink a mojito, few people appreciate the rum," he says. "But everyone loves mint and strawberries."

His mocktail starts with a clover honey simple syrup, which gets crushed with mint, soda water and strawberry purée, then topped with reduced mint jelly.

When it comes to mocktails, he notes, "the difference lies in creating the residual flavor profile that would have been present if alcohol were there." For instance, if you've got a Manhattan with bourbon, you need to find an alternate source for caramel and oak flavors; he uses tea, caramel syrup, a macerated cherry with cherry juice and balsamic vinegar.

Amber Palmer, \$8, Wine
Director Pascaline Lepeltier,
Rouge Tomato, New York City.
RECIPE, p. 93.



Max Toste, owner and beverage manager of Deep Ellum in Allston, Mass., agrees that flavor and texture are critical. "[Without] the booze, you're removing a portion of the drink's character," he says, and ginger, citrus and bitters can be good substitutes.

His nojito (\$4, recipe, plateonline.com) takes the flavors of bitters, mint, and lime, and blends them with a sugar cube and simple syrup, topped off with ginger beer. The drink, Toste says, looks good in a highball glass with mint. Toste ends up making a lot of "low-alcohol" cocktails, including the methadone, which while not technically a drink, contains ginger beer, lime and enough bitters (15 to 16 dashes per cocktail) to equal about half an ounce of something stronger.

Here's mud in your eye
This toast became popular among soldiers in the trenches of World War I, but most likely originated in American saloons in the late 1800s. It was popular with English hunting and race horse crowd.

At New York City's Rouge Tomato, Wine Director Pascaline Lepeltier loves to play with mocktails. "We want the same kind of complexity," she says, or the customer will miss the textural and flavor-enhancing

qualities of alcohol. For the amber Palmer (\$8, recipe, p. 93), rosemary grapefruit juice is enhanced with jasmine and black tea. Agave syrup, mint and club soda round everything out.

"The idea is to bring more intensity of flavors and to show [off] the ingredients," Lepeltier says, so even heavy imbibers won't miss the booze.

Dani Friedland doesn't miss the liquor in her club soda and lime. ✱ For recipes from this article and more, visit plateonline.com.