COCKTAIL CLASSICS

BEING A BARTENDER REQUIRES far more than memorizing a few recipes and learning to use some basic tools. Sure, you might be able to mix a drink, but that is no guarantee you will consistently produce truly great drinks.

A bartender is in many ways like a chef—taking individual ingredients and mixing them together to create an artful blending of flavors. The best cocktails are a form of cuisine in their own right.

Just as a great chef must have a command of the foundations of cooking, like a mastery of classic French sauces, the bartender must understand the basic techniques, processes, methods, and products involved in the craft. And this includes an understanding and appreciation of the classic cocktails. These recipes are the foundation for nearly every existing drink and provide the basis for creating new and distinctive drinks.

The following ten cocktails form the basis for most modern cocktails. Understand their histories, variations, and processes, and you'll be well on your way to a better appreciation of your craft as well as being able to create original cocktails that may someday take their place among the greats.

The Old-Fashioned Whiskey Cocktail

Unlike other cuisines of the world, the cocktail is only a few hundred years old. While we don't know precisely when or where the cocktail made its official first appearance, we can trace it back as far as 1806. There, in a popular New York publication called *The Balance, and Columbian Repository*, we find the cocktail defined.

In the May 13th edition, an editor responded to a letter from a devoted reader about the term "cock-tail" as it appeared in the previous week's edition, saying:

> *As I make it a point, never to publish anything (under my editorial head) but which I can explain, I shall not hesitate to gratify the curiosity of my inquisitive correspondent: Cocktail, then is a stimulating liquor, composed of spirits of any kind, sugar, water and bitters—it is vulgarly called a bittered sling.*

At the core of this, you see the definition of the cocktail: "spirits of any kind, sugar, water, and bitters." While the term "cocktail" has since been broadened to include far more drinks, and with a far less distinct definition, this original definition is one of which all bartenders should be aware. As the cocktail evolved, this earliest of cocktails became known simply as the Old-Fashioned.

There are many who claim the Old-Fashioned was invented at the Pendennis Club in Louisville, Kentucky. One of the oldest records of a recipe going by the name of Old-Fashioned is from *Modern American Drinks* by George J. Kappeler, published in 1895:

☐ THE OLD-FASHIONED WHISKEY COCKTAIL

Dissolve a small lump of sugar with a little water in a whiskey-glass; add two dashes Angostura bitters, a small piece ice, a piece lemon-peel, one jigger whiskey. Mix with small bar-spoon and serve, leaving spoon in glass.

Remembering the earlier stated definition of a cocktail, what is an Old-Fashioned but "spirits of any kind [whiskey], sugar, water and bitters"? To draw an even closer connection, many recipes of that time would also indicate that other spirits could be used in an Old-Fashioned in order to make an Old-Fashioned Brandy Cocktail, or an Old-Fashioned Rum Cocktail.

In the first known bartender's guide, *How to Mix Drinks* (Dick & Fitzgerald, 1862), Jerry Thomas writes:

WHISKEY COCKTAIL

Use a small bar glass.

3 or 4 dashes of gum syrup
2 do. Bitters (Bogart's)
1 wine-glass of whiskey, and a piece of lemon peel.

Fill one-third full of fine ice; shake and strain in a fancy red-wine glass.

Editor's note: "do." was an abbreviation for "ditto," which referred to the word "dashes" in the line above.

This is the same cocktail as the Old-Fashioned (gum syrup is essentially just sugar and water with the addition of gum arabic for extra body) and leads to the conclusion that the Pendennis Club didn't actually invent the Old-Fashioned, but simply provided their customers with a whiskey cocktail made the old-fashioned way. Many cocktails have far more stories attempting to describe their origins. After all, drinking and storytelling go hand in hand, so treat any tale of cocktail invention with a bit of skepticism.

Our favorite Old-Fashioned cocktail:

OLD-FASHIONED WHISKEY COCKTAIL

1 tsp. Simple Syrup
2 dashes Angostura Bitters
1½ oz. Bourbon or Rye Whiskey

Fill a 5-oz. old-fashioned glass with cracked ice. Stir to mix the syrup, bitters, and the water, which will melt off the ice. Add the whiskey.

Stir to mix and chill. Garnish with a lemon twist, serve with straws or small swizzle stick.

This Old-Fashioned reflects the way this cocktail should taste. Simple syrup is used because it's easier than dissolving the sugar in the glass and also provides a more consistent sweetening. Unlike modern renditions, there is no cherry or orange muddled in with the bitters and sweetener at the beginning and there is no soda or water at the end.

The beauty of this recipe lies in its simplicity and authenticity. Hundreds of years ago, spirits were so rough that sweeteners were needed to mask their flavors. Today, spirits are of much higher quality and don't need to be masked; instead the sweetener is being used to counterbalance the alcoholic bite, as well as fill out the flavor profile in areas where the spirit doesn't touch.

Bitters, as we have seen, are at the very heart of the definition of a cocktail. Prior to around 1900 it was almost unthinkable to have a cocktail that didn't include bitters in some form. Bitters, when added in small amounts, offer complexity to the overall flavor of the drink.

Finally, the water that is added to the Old-Fashioned and other cocktails through the ice serves to tone down and mellow the overall flavors as well as soften the bite typical of a straight spirit. Topping the drink off with additional water, as is often done, only results in a very diluted drink.

But what about that cherry and orange? They were not part of the original drink and are in fact relative newcomers to the old-fashioned glass. You'll find an orange slice being used instead of a lemon twist in the 1930 printing of *The Savoy Cocktail Book* by Harry Craddock. For the next several decades you'll see lemon, pineapple, orange, and cherry all make an appearance, either separately or in various combinations, but always as a garnish. Exactly when the practice of muddling the fruit came into fashion is hard to determine, but it doesn't appear to be referenced in print much before the 1990s.

The modern maraschino cherry didn't come onto the scene until the early 1900s, just before Prohibition. It was intended as a "temperance" replacement for the brandy-soaked marasca cherries, which had been previously in common use. Prohibition made the original version impossible to obtain in the United States, and so maraschino cherries quickly replaced them in baking and garnishing. Muddling them into the drink does little to improve the flavor or the aesthetics of this drink.

The orange is a slightly different story. If you glance over many of the historical recipes, you will occasionally see a dash of orange curaçao added. Muddling a slice of orange into the Old-Fashioned extracts similar essential oils to those found in orange liqueurs. Another way to obtain these oils is to slice off a small disk of orange peel, about the size of a half-dollar, point the orange side toward the ice in the glass, and squeeze the peel to release its oils over the ice before adding the whiskey. This will provide an excellent essence of orange to the drink. Garnish the drink with a half orange-wheel and cherry, permitting the fresh fruits to play the ornamental role for which they were intended.

By playing with these techniques and various spirits you will rediscover this seminal cocktail as it was crafted over two hundred years ago.

The Manhattan Cocktail

A hundred years after the Old-Fashioned, near the end of the 1800s, we find the Manhattan. In the second half of the 1800s cocktails began to really catch on, and bartenders were expanding both their repertoire of drinks and the palette of products at their disposal for making them. Simplicity of design, however, was still very much at the core of all drinks.

The Manhattan appears to have come onto the scene about 1882, at which time it was mentioned that a cocktail made from just whiskey, sweet vermouth, and bitters was coming into vogue. It went by not only "Manhattan," but

also "Turf Club Cocktail" and "Jockey Club Cocktail." The "Manhattan" moniker almost certainly comes from the Manhattan Club of New York, with the other clubs eager to have their names attached to the drink as well.

Like the Old-Fashioned, the recipe for the Manhattan is deceptively simple—just whiskey, sweet vermouth, and bitters. And likewise, the art of making a great one is in the details.

Our favorite Manhattan recipe:

MANHATTAN

1½ oz. Rye Whiskey
½ oz. Sweet Vermouth
1 dash Angostura Bitters

Stir with ice and strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Garnish with a cherry or lemon twist.

You'll note two peculiarities in this recipe. The first is the use of rye whiskey; the second is that it is stirred.

As indicated earlier, this drink originated in New York, and in those days the rye whiskey distillers were located in the East, making rye whiskey the spirit of choice. Bourbon, from Kentucky and the surrounding area, was far less common here. Today, Bourbon is the default spirit of the Manhattan, but rye has been making a comeback and is worth seeking out. Many people substitute Canadian whisky for rye, but the two are actually quite a bit different. For one thing, rye whiskey must be made from at least 51 percent rye, while Canadian whisky contains far less. This doesn't mean that you can't make a Manhattan with Canadian whisky, or Bourbon for that matter, but they will yield vastly different results.

Stirring versus shaking is an age-old debate, and it plays a big role in getting the proper results in many cocktails, specifically a Manhattan. Both shaking and stirring are intended to chill the drink. In addition, as the ice chills the drink it also is melting and therefore contributing water to the drink, an important addition to every cocktail.

Whether you choose to shake or stir your drink, you'll find that both do an excellent job. There are, however, differences: Stirring takes slightly longer to chill the drink. And shaking will result in a cloudy, aerated drink, while stirring creates one that remains crystal clear. From a presentation standpoint, it is often better to stir, while from a speed standpoint it is always better to shake. When a drink contains a citrus juice or other cloudy ingredient, then you might as well shake. However, if it contains only clear ingredients, as in the case of a Manhattan, then stirring is preferred.

Just as the Old-Fashioned could be made with different spirits to create slightly different variations on a theme, there are also variations of the Manhattan. Initially, the Manhattan was designed to use sweet vermouth. But if a customer wanted it made with dry vermouth instead, they would ask for a "dry" Manhattan. And asking for a "perfect" Manhattan indicates a 50/50 mixture of sweet and dry vermouth.

Like its progenitor the Old-Fashioned, this recipe contains bitters. And while the vogue for the past decade was to provide bitters on a "by request" basis, this vital ingredient has staged a deserved return to the Manhattan and should be provided as a standard ingredient.

The Martini Cocktail

Making its appearance only a few years after the Manhattan, the Martini is a cocktail that has come to be the icon of this genre, so much so that almost any drink in a stemmed cocktail glass is now dubbed a Martini by the drinking public.

There are many stories surrounding the origins of the Martini, but its true origins appear to lie with its forgotten sibling, the Martinez. In *The Bar-Tender's Guide* (1887), Jerry Thomas writes:

MARTINEZ COCKTAIL

Use a small wine-glass.

Take:

1 dash of Boker's bitters
2 dashes of Maraschino
1 pony of Old Tom gin
1 wine-glass of vermouth
2 small lumps of ice

Shake up thoroughly, and strain into a large cocktail glass. Put a quarter of a slice of lemon in the glass and serve. If the guest prefers it very sweet, add two dashes of gum syrup.

Editor's note: Boker's bitters was an aromatic bitters similar to angostura, Old Tom gin was a sweetened gin that is no longer available, and "wine-glass" was a term usually used to refer to a 2-ounce pour.

In the same book, a recipe for a Manhattan was listed that was essentially the same, except that it used rye whiskey instead of gin. As we previously saw, the Manhattan had also been described five years earlier as being simply whiskey, sweet vermouth, and bitters, so clearly there were some significant variations making the rounds, and it would take a few years for a consensus to settle in on what the proper recipe was. In those days, the art of bartending was in its golden age, with a great deal of competition, experimentation, and advancement of the craft.

By the 1890s recipes for a drink now known as the Martini were appearing. In *Modern American Drinks: How to Mix and Serve All Kinds of Cups and Drinks* (1895), George J. Kappeler writes:

MARTINI COCKTAIL

Half a mixing-glass full of fine ice, three dashes orange bitters, one-half jigger Tom gin, one-half jigger Italian vermouth, a piece lemon peel. Mix, strain into cocktail-glass. Add a maraschino cherry, if desired by customer.

From this we can see that the Martini, containing just gin, sweet vermouth, and bitters, was really a gin version of the Manhattan. And like the Manhattan, when ordered nor-

mally it would be made with sweet vermouth, and when ordered "dry" with dry vermouth.

While the Manhattan has pretty much survived to the modern day with its recipe intact, the Martini has not fared so well. It was following Prohibition, when untrained amateurs took to the bar, that the concept of "dry" when applied to the Martini came to mean using less dry vermouth. Today some bartenders use none at all. Orange bitters, once a required component of the Martini, were forgotten, to the point of near extinction.

One could hardly consider a glass of cold gin a cocktail deserving of the name Martini. To rediscover the sophisticated balance and complexity that is possible with the Martini, it is necessary to return to its roots.

MARTINI COCKTAIL (SWEET)

1 oz. Gin
1 oz. Sweet Vermouth
1 dash Orange Bitters

Stir with ice, strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Garnish with a lemon twist.

MARTINI COCKTAIL (DRY)

1 oz. Gin
1 oz. Dry Vermouth
1 dash Orange Bitters

Stir with ice, strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Garnish with a lemon twist.

Try each of the above exactly as indicated. As with any culinary product, the quality of the ingredients that go into it will greatly affect the outcome, so be sure to use a good gin and good vermouth.

There are several aspects of these recipes that you will notice as being significantly different from what you might be used to. For one thing, there are only 2 ounces of total liquid being used here; this obviously will result in a drink that will look rather lost in today's 5- to 8-ounce cocktail glasses. In the days before Prohibition, the typical cocktail glass was about 4 ounces in size, so the recipes above,

with the addition of water from mixing, resulted in a perfectly sized drink.

Another difference you'll see is what appears to be a massive amount of vermouth being used. The result is a drink that bears little resemblance to today's Martini. Push your prejudices aside and instead focus simply on the overall taste of the drink itself, and you'll find the vermouth is not only enjoyable but in perfect balance with the gin.

You'll also notice that we have reintroduced orange bitters to the recipe. Prior to Prohibition, orange bitters were more commonly used in cocktails than the ubiquitous angostura. Currently there are two brands being sold in America: The Sazerac Company of New Orleans manufactures "Reagan's Orange Bitters #6," and Fee Brothers of Rochester, New York, also produces a full line of bitters, which includes their own orange bitters.

As noted, the Martini should be stirred, like the Manhattan, to retain its clarity.

And while the olive is the more popular modern garnish, the olive brine affects the delicate balance of the drink. We prefer, at least initially, to get to know this drink with this more understated lemon twist.

Perhaps more than with any other cocktail, the ratios of the ingredients in a martini require precise balance. No one ingredient should outshine the other, and all ingredients should be playing together in the final product.

The Martini recipes listed above would be inappropriate to serve to a random customer who simply asked for a "Martini." But through the careful understanding of not only the history of this drink but its blending of complex flavors, you'll gain new insights into the mystique of this cocktail.

Margarita, Daiquiri, and Sidecar

As we've seen through the Old-Fashioned, Manhattan, and even Martini, drinks in the mixed drink category known as "cocktail" always included bitters as one of their ingredients. In those days, there were many different categories of mixed drinks, with the category itself defining much of the recipe. Forgotten monikers like daisy, fizz, shrub, crusta, and the still-surviving sour, were each categories of their own.

The term "cocktail," which is actually the newcomer on the scene, grew to such popularity that it eventually came to encompass many of the drinks that were previously from other categories. The "sour" is one such category and it even has vestiges in many modern cocktail names, like the whiskey sour.

The traditional sour was made using a spirit of any kind, a sweetening ingredient, and a souring ingredient. The sweetener could be as simple as just sugar, or it could be a sweet liqueur or cordial. The souring ingredient was normally lemon juice, but it could also be lime juice or grapefruit juice, or some combination of these.

Today, the Margarita is the reigning sour. Like most cocktails, the history of the Margarita is often debated and never resolved. A commonly repeated story has it being invented in 1948 by Margarita Sames for a large party she was holding in Acapulco, Mexico. There is a competing story that claims it was created in 1942 by Francisco Morales, who called this drink a "Daisy," which in Spanish is "Margarita." Another tale insists it was created in the early 1930s at the Caliente Race Track in Tijuana. These and many other conflicting stories all claim to recount the origins of the most popular tequila-based cocktail. But one thing that all of them agree upon is that the original recipe consists of tequila, Cointreau, and lime juice, which clearly follows the classic recipe for a sour.

The Daiquiri is a rum version of the traditional sour, although these days many people will unfortunately con-

fuse it with the blended ice "slushee" version, which is more reminiscent of drinks from childhood.

It is fairly certain that the name of this drink comes from the similarly named town on the east coast of Cuba. While the commonly told story says that it was an American by the name of Jennings Cox who was living in Daiquiri who invented the drink, it is more likely that this was just a commonly served drink, and that Americans who came to visit Mr. Cox and were served this drink began referring to it as "that Daiquiri drink." While the Margarita uses Cointreau as its sweetening ingredient, the Daiquiri uses just plain sugar or simple syrup for the task. However, it too is a sour.

The first appearance of the Sidecar recipe is found in *Cocktails: How to Mix Them*, by Robert Vermeire, published in 1922. Here, the recipe was listed as "⅛ gill of fresh Lemon Juice, ⅛ gill of Cointreau, ⅛ gill of Cognac Brandy." The use of "gill" here might be confusing, but the important thing to note is the equal proportions. It is debated whether this drink originated in Paris or London, but it is generally accepted that this drink was created in Europe at just about the same time that American Prohibition began.

For all of these cocktails it has become overly common for bars to use a "sour mix" to make them, often just combining a premade sour mix with the base spirit in order to quickly and efficiently churn out drinks. This approach, however, is not one that should be followed by a quality bar, any more than a quality restaurant would premake all of their meals and simply reheat them in the microwave.

In achieving balance, these drinks should be neither overly sour nor overly sweet. And the base spirit, while not dominant, should be present in flavor.

Our favorite recipes:

MARGARITA

1½ oz. Tequila
1 oz. Cointreau
½ oz. Lime Juice

Shake with ice and strain into a salt-rimmed cocktail glass, or a salt-rimmed, ice-filled margarita glass. Garnish with a wedge of lime.

DAIQUIRI

2 oz. Light Rum
½ oz. Lime Juice
1 tsp. Bar Sugar

Shake with ice and strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Garnish with a slice of lime.

SIDECAR

2 oz. Cognac
1 oz. Cointreau
½ oz. Lemon Juice

Shake with ice and strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Garnish with a lemon twist.

While each of these cocktails follows the same basic approach of spirit plus sweet plus sour, the actual ratios being used for each of them is listed differently. Because of the variation among spirits brands and the even greater variation in things like natural citrus, you should be prepared to adjust your recipes for balance. These recipes are merely a starting point.

A mastery of these principles can help you to improve the way you make drinks like the Lemon Drop, Kamikaze, Cosmopolitan, Between the Sheets, and Aviation, all of which owe their origins to the sour.

The Mai-Tai

Just as America was coming out of Prohibition, Don Beach was setting up shop with his Polynesian-themed restaurants, which became known as "Don the Beachcomber." In the 1940s Victor Bergeron threw his hat in the ring and started the "Trader Vic's" chain. These two franchises specifically ushered in a new era, not only in restaurant culture but in the cocktails they produced as well. Rum was the prominent spirit, with various, often exotic, juices and syrups being used as flavoring agents. This was the time of the "tiki craze," and there were many similarly themed restaurants that sprang up during this time in order to provide the American public with a much-needed vacation, one sip at a time.

Competition between these restaurants was often fierce, with their various cocktail recipes being so closely guarded that even the bartenders themselves did not know how to make them. They would use custom-made flavored syrups and mixes labeled "Don's Mix #1," "Don's Mix #2", and so forth. The bartenders wouldn't know precisely what was in the mix, and therefore couldn't reveal the recipes even if they wanted to.

This caused a problem, however, for the customers. After having a particularly fine drink at one bar, they would innocently attempt to order it at some other bar and be faced with an apologetic bartender who had no idea how to make it. Often, these bartenders would attempt to come up with a close approximation. If they felt that their result was a fine-tasting drink, it would then become a new incarnation of the drink.

With the casual proliferation of such a variety of different recipes for a drink with a single name, it is difficult to identify which is the original drink. One of the most popular drinks during this time was the Mai-Tai, and because of this it probably ended up with the highest number of variations. Fortunately, the version that started its popularity, which is referred to as the original Mai-Tai, was recorded by Victor "Trader Vic" Bergeron in 1944. There was apparently a similarly named drink listed on an earlier "Don the Beachcomber" menu, but its recipe was so radically differ-

ent (and unpopular) that the Trader Vic recipe is clearly a different drink entirely.

As recorded by Mr. Bergeron himself, the original recipe for the Mai-Tai was as follows:

☐ MAI-TAI (ORIGINAL FORMULA)

2 oz. 17-year-old J. Wray Nephew Jamaican Rum
½ oz. French Garnier Orgeat
½ oz. Holland DeKuyper Orange Curaçao
¼ oz. Rock Candy Syrup
Juice from one fresh lime

Hand shake and garnish with half of the lime shell inside the drink and float a sprig of fresh mint at the edge of the glass.

Over time, this recipe went through a number of changes, often to accommodate changes in product brands, with the final (and present-day) version being one that turns to a custom-made Mai-Tai mix to be added to rum and lime juice. Those in the know, however, will order their Mai-Tai's at Trader Vic's by requesting a "San Francisco Mai-Tai," a drink made from scratch, without the mix.

This drink is served at bars across the country with ingredients as far reaching as pineapple juice, grenadine, passion fruit syrup, orange juice, amaretto, and even cherry brandy. Sometimes, the resultant drink may be quite good indeed, but technically it is not a Mai-Tai and would be better to take an original name than to wear the guise of this classic.

A variation of the original Mai-Tai that holds up well without worrying about specific branded products is this one:

☐ MAI-TAI

1 oz. Light Rum
1 oz. Gold Rum
½ oz. Orange Curaçao
½ oz. Orgeat
½ oz. Lime Juice

Shake with ice. Strain into an ice-filled Old-Fashioned glass. Garnish with a speared pineapple chunk, cherry, and a sprig of mint.

Another variation is to include super-premium or exotic rums.

Bloody Mary

The Bloody Mary is an interesting cocktail, with ingredients more commonly found in the kitchen than behind the bar. The most credible story is that it was invented by Fernand Petiot of Harry's American Bar in Paris around 1920.

A vodka-based cocktail, the Bloody Mary owes its flavor to the other ingredients.

The basic Bloody Mary recipe:

BLOODY MARY

1½ oz. Vodka
4 oz. Tomato Juice
¼ oz. Fresh Lemon Juice
2 dashes Worcestershire
4 dashes Tabasco
Pinch of Salt and Pepper

Combine all ingredients in mixing glass and roll back and forth to mix. Strain into an ice-filled pint glass or red-wine glass. Garnish with wedge of lemon and lime.

Something interesting has happened with the Bloody Mary that sets it apart from other drinks. While it is often easy to get into a debate over the "correctness" of one recipe or the other, the Bloody Mary has become a drink in which the differences between personal renditions are celebrated.

The above is essentially the "mother" recipe from which different offspring arise. The vodka and tomato juice are the core ingredients, but as for the rest, anything goes as long as you arrive at a spicy and savory drink with a rich and robust flavor.

Among the creative ingredients that have found their way into the Bloody Mary are celery salt, soy sauce, wasabi, horseradish, cumin, chili powder, curry powder, cayenne pepper, ginger, liquid smoke, steak sauce, angostura bitters, sherry, beef broth, clam juice, and countless others. The Bloody Mary has essentially become the "meat loaf" of cocktails. Almost anything goes as long as it's recognizable in the end.

And while originally the garnish of a wedge of lemon and lime was relatively unassuming, such a modest appointment is almost an insult today. The choices for garnishing a Bloody Mary can range from a simple selection of olives and different vegetables, to cooked appetizers that are specifically designed to be a value-added accompaniment. Bloody Marys have appeared with sautéed peppers, roasted baby onions, spicy shrimp, chicken satay, cubes of beef, and even whole raw oysters. It's the drink that drinks like a meal, where a little ostentation is welcome.