



Cocktails & Spirits

In this edition we'll look at the top cocktail styles, spirits and ingredients making waves on menus.

Top Cocktails on Menus

Frozen, Latin drinks top the list with the greatest share of cocktails listed at restaurants.

Martini variations are still strong, yet growth is slowing compared to other drinks. **Revived classics**, cocktails with brown spirits and retro drinks, have started to make a splash. **Heavier, cream-based drinks** like Irish Coffees and Mudslides are in decline, indicating a move

away from the "dessert cocktail" craze of the early 2000s.

Top Spirits Used In Cocktails

Tequila and **rum** reflect the popularity of Latin and Caribbean drinks on menus. **Vodka's** share corresponds to the continuing demand for martini variations, though purists will tell you that a martini contains gin and little else. **Vodka's** share on menus is almost double that of **gin**, yet gin shows more growth, indicating it will be the next clear spirit to come into vogue. Gin makers are branching into new flavor profiles, as vodka makers have done. Gin fans like its already flavorful notes of juniper and herbs.

Top Cocktail Ingredients

Lime juice tops the list of current trends influencing alcoholic beverages, and shows strong growth because it is a key ingredient in all the most-menued drinks and is often a garnish for many others, including margaritas, mojitos, gin & tonics and Collins drinks. **Mint**, showing a one percentage point increase in share, also demonstrates how popular classic mojitos and fruity variations have become on menus. **Sugar, coffee** and **whipped cream** show declines, indicating that the "dessert cocktail" trend may be waning.

Cocktail Trend: Seasonal & Festive

Seasonality is easy to see in spring and summer, when berries, fruit and herbs are at their peak and chilled drinks emerge. You'll see cinnamon, pumpkin pie and apple cranberry in the fall. Winter brings peppermint and chocolate indulgences and warm drinks, like Irish coffee and hot toddies. When seasonal fruit is in short supply, holiday-themed drink can help fill in the gaps with egg nog flavors, love potions and other celebratory drinks.

Cocktail Trend: Regionality

New Orleans has its Milk Punch (among other cocktails) and **Kentucky** has Mint Juleps, but there are other ways to bring regional flavors to the bar, such as using fresh, local produce and regional flavorings, like Old Bay or

Top Cocktails on Menus

% Share of Beverage Items

	Q1 2010	Q1 2012
Cocktail	23.6	25.1
Margarita	21.8	21.5
Martini	15.2	15.4
Mojito	4.5	5.0
Cosmopolitan	3.1	3.1
Long Island Iced Tea	3.1	2.9
Sangria	2.4	3.3
Piña Colada	2.5	1.6
Bloody Mary	2.1	1.9
Daiquiri	1.8	1.4
Lemon Drop	1.2	1.3
Mai Tai	1.1	1.1
Bellini	1.1	1.1
Manhattan	0.9	1.0
Irish Coffee	1.0	0.8
Frozen Cocktail	0.7	1.0
Hurricane	0.8	0.6
Mimosa	0.6	0.7
Caipirinha	0.7	0.5
Mudslide	0.6	0.4

Top Cocktail Ingredients

% Share of Beverage Items

	Q1 2010	Q1 2012
Lime Juice	19.4	20.5
Sweet & Sour Mix	21.0	18.7
Triple Sec	12.2	11.7
Orange Juice	9.6	9.0
Cointreau	8.3	7.4
Lime	7.1	9.6
Cranberry Juice	7.5	6.6
Pineapple Juice	7.5	6.7
Sugar	7.1	6.4
Tequila	7.1	6.3
Lemon Juice	5.2	6.5
Grand Marnier	5.5	5.3
Bacardi Rum	4.8	4.8
Mint	4.4	5.4
Vodka	4.7	4.2
Club Soda	4.5	4.5
Strawberry	4.0	4.3
Coffee	4.6	3.4
Kahlua	4.5	3.3
Whipped Cream	4.2	2.7



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Culinary Trends

Tabasco.

Bloody Marys are another great starting point for regionality. Plenty of places mix up the vodka flavors, spices and garnishes; others switch out vegetable juices. Prune in **New York City** has a Bloody Mariner with Absolut Citron Vodka, clam juice and olives.

Cocktail Trend: Speakeasy Culture

At Chicago's **In Fine Spirits**, classics are described as cocktails created before and slightly after American Prohibition. "Artisanal spirits and liqueurs are hand-selected by taste—our bartenders craft beverages of exceptional quality and value, including our classic cocktail repertory and modern interpretations of the classics. Each of our cocktails incorporates modern, artisanal spirits, fresh garnishes and, in some cases, house made ingredients." **Fleming's Prime Steakhouse** has featured Retro Chic Cocktails such as a Sidecar made with Earl Grey tea and elderflower liqueur, and the Sailor Daiquiri, made with rum, pineapple juice, and lemon juice.

Top Cocktail Menu Claims	Top Ingredient Marketing Claims
Classic	Fresh
Signature	Housemade
Skinny	House
Seasonal	Local
House	Signature
Hand-Crafted	Made from Scratch
Gluten-Free	Real
Original	Homemade
Creamy	Premium
Non-Alcoholic	100% Blue Agave

Cocktail Trend: Local/Farm Market Fresh

Bartenders are taking a culinary approach to crafting cocktails. Many shop at farmer's markets and hunt for the freshest ingredients. Herbs have gained importance: mint, basil, lavender and rosemary are the leaders here, but lesser-known herbs like lemon thyme and orange blossom are also emerging.

A mix of new elements, like beets and cucumbers are emerging. At the **Clover Club** in New York City, the Green Giant features Old Tom gin, lemon, sugar snap peas, tarragon, and dry vermouth.

Cocktail Trend: Happy Hours

Happy hours have helped bring people back to casual dining settings in a tough economy, while also expanding hours and generating traffic at off-peak times, like late afternoon and late night.

Today's happy hours are upgrades from earlier versions filled with well drinks and warmed over food. **Ruth's Chris Steak House** features a "Sizzle, Swizzle and Swirl Happy Hour" bar menu at select locations: \$7 food and drink items include a prime burger with fries, tenderloin skewers over greens, a New England lobster roll with fries, a Pomegranate Martini and Ruth's Manhattan. **Bonefish Grill** enhanced its \$5-cocktail happy hour with "Happier Hours" from 4 to 6:30 p.m.; food offerings include Lollipop Sushi Rolls and Bang Bang Tacos with shrimp.

Cocktail Trend: Skinnier Versions

Offering a few slimmed down versions (with sugar substitutes and natural flavors) of popular drinks appeals to the weight-conscious crowd. Skinny did not appear as a cocktail menu claim at all in Q1 2009, but described 17 cocktails during Q1 2012.

For the craft-minded mixologists who want to avoid bottled syrups or sugar substitutes, sweeteners, like agave, honey and maple help add sweetness from more natural sources. Naming specific honey varietals and maple syrup origins adds even more sophistication to menu copy.

Menu Insights To Go

Some ideas for making the most of on-trend beverage ingredients and other elements of the current cocktail culture:

- **Take a Temp:** Frozen drinks work in summer and hot toddies warm up winter, but having fun with temperature and form creates inversions like cold, spiked cocoa or a warm mojito with citrus, mint and tea
- **Sweetening the Deal:** Low calorie sugar substitutes help fuel the "skinny drink" craze, while agave, honey and maple reinforce artisan and more natural drinks
- **Color-code:** Sort a beverage menu by spirits to help guide customers to new ways to try different things.
- **Add Some Fizz:** Boutique sodas have built-in flavors, a splash of selzer can bring new interest to old favorites, such as piña colodas or sangria and carbonation can make skinny drinks bigger
- **Pair Up:** Food and drink specials (like a Steak and Sangria special at Fleming's) help promote both
- **Add a Sprig:** Branch out beyond mint to bring fresh flavor to mojitos, gin & tonics and other refreshing drinks.
- **Mock it Up:** Offer non-alcoholic versions of best-selling drinks for non-imbibers



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