



## CHEERS! Cocktail Trends

Cocktails have morphed into artistic interpretations of flavor. Consumers now have more choices and trends to choose from than ever before. This report will take a look at the continued rebirth of the classic cocktail, unique ingredients infused in craft cocktails along with other cocktail trends.

### A Refill

As with many sectors of the foodservice industry, consumers cut back in their alcohol purchases at restaurants and bars in 2009. From Mintel's 2009 consumer survey, 40% of respondents indicated that they are drinking fewer alcoholic beverages at bars and restaurants than last year, with stricter budgeting being the top reason for this reduced consumption, followed by consumers drinking less alcohol in general.

### Flavor innovation is still important

However, consumers still appear open to new flavors and innovation with their alcoholic beverages. Fifty-seven percent of consumers reported that they like to try new flavors of alcoholic drinks. And if given the opportunity to sample these new flavors, such as through a sponsor promotion at a bar, 49% of respondents indicated they would like to try a new alcoholic beverage.

### Flavors continue to emerge

Flavors that emerged in 2009 illustrate the possibilities for cocktails. Fun, sweet flavors such as bubble gum, peanut butter and jelly, toasted marshmallow and cherry lime are familiar childhood flavors now making their way to cocktails. On the flip side, savory introductions such as dill, cilantro and chile flavored cocktails were created to satisfy the tastes of cocktail enthusiasts and further connect the restaurant menu to the bar menu.

### Here's To Your Health

One of the top reasons consumers reported cutting back in their alcohol consumption was related to health and diet, with about a quarter of respondents citing some variation of this reason to explain their reduced consumption.

Although consumers are already cutting back because of health and diet concerns, there appears to be a willingness to accept drinks that have added nutritional benefits, with 26% indicating they would drink more alcoholic beverages if they added functional ingredients like vitamins and enzymes.

Though it would be difficult for spirit companies to market their brands as "healthy" or "better for you," adding functional ingredients and highlighting them in a cocktail's description could appeal to those consumers who are concerned about the health effects of drinking.

### Reasons why consumers are drinking fewer alcoholic drinks at restaurants (2009)

I am budgeting my money more this year	64%
Drinking less alcohol in general	48%
Watching calories/weight	27%
For health reasons	22%
Some other reason	7%

### Top 10 Cocktail Flavors Over Time

Beverage Flavor	Q4 2007	Q4 2008	Q4 2009	% Change
Strawberry	116	121	129	11%
Raspberry	82	98	97	18%
Mango	67	82	93	39%
Peach	65	62	58	-11%
Pomegranate	37	62	86	132%
Apple	43	41	42	-2%
Chocolate	34	30	30	-12%
Banana	33	29	27	-18%
Orange	27	26	24	-11%
Pineapple	15	27	33	120%

### "Spa-Tails"

In 2006, Mintel noted that cocktail menu direction was trending toward the use of functional ingredients such as superfruits.

Cocktails were introduced to functional and flavorful ingredients through pomegranate in 2006. In Q1 2006, Mintel noted six pomegranate cocktails on the

menu. In Q4 2009, Mintel notes 86 pomegranate martinis on the menu.

While superfruits like pomegranate lend more flavor than function to cocktails, superfruit flavors are becoming more popular in cocktails, and some restaurants are creating cocktails specifically with health benefits in mind.

**Fiore Restaurant** in Ventura, Calif., created an *Anti-Oxitin* with Veev Açai liqueur, fresh pomegranate juice and sparkling wine.

Chicago's **Nacional 27's** "spa-tails" are made with "stevia and miracle fruit for sugar free drinking." "Spa-tails" include their *Mo-Healthy-Ito* and *Lookbetternaked*.



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# Culinary Trends



## Mix It Up

Among cocktails listed on restaurant menus, Latin-inspired drinks accounted for four of the top 10 cocktails during the fourth quarter of 2009. Margarita, with a multitude of flavors—like traditional, strawberry and orange—was the top cocktail listed, with mojito, piña colada and sangria representing other Latin influences.

And while the mojito exhibited some of the strongest growth from Q4 2007-Q4 2009, it was classic and indulgent flavors that drove cocktail growth. Classics like the Black Russian and Manhattan started to appear on menus in greater frequency, as consumers rediscovered old favorites, while Champagne cocktails and caipirinha appealed to consumers looking to indulge.

## Amber Spirits

Like a warm fireplace, the glint of an amber spirit raises the temperature of even the coldest menu. These traditionally heavier spirits—namely whiskey, bourbon, scotch, cognac and dark rum—have started appearing in greater frequency on menus, growing 7% from Q4 2007 to Q4 2009. The resurgence in these amber spirits has been led by a renewed interest in the classic cocktails noted earlier, like the Manhattan.

## With a Twist

It's not just the old-time favorites that are getting an update on beverage menus. Relatively newer, and certainly more popular, drinks are also getting updates. While the late 1990s and early 2000s saw an explosion in the choices open to martini drinkers, now it's the margarita's and mojito's turns.

Flavor variation is the twist that either makes a new cocktail more approachable because it ties in a familiar taste or it turns a classic into something new.

The mojito's popularity opens the door for endless flavor possibility. A variety of fresh fruits and herbs are being used to create a "twisted" version of the classic Latin drink.

## Cocktail Menu Direction

As noted consumers indicated that they are drinking less than a year ago. While the main reason is budgeting more tightly than in year's past, restaurant operators are taking a number of approaches to address this decline.

### Take Time to Imbibe

To stave off, or at least diminish, reduced consumer spending, a number of restaurant operators have introduced promotions designed to draw customers into drinking occasions during non-peak hours.

Maximizing each daypart and the moments in between is essential. During these times, offering a value-positioned food and drink menu will help draw traffic among customers who may otherwise believe that they can't afford that dining occasion.

### What's this one taste like?

While many restaurants offer prose-like descriptions of their food menu offerings, the descriptions on the cocktail menu are sometimes limited to a few brand names and the major ingredients. While the cocktail menu shouldn't morph into an epic, it should be an area where operators put their best descriptive foot forward. After pairing their drink selections to the food they're eating, using descriptions on the menu was the second biggest influence on how consumers decided what to drink, beating out recommendations of friends, waitstaff and advertisements.

In developing a cocktail menu, operators must be cognizant of the limited contextual knowledge some diners have at that moment. Listing a brand name of a particular rum may be helpful to some, but it may not always convey what the consumer will taste. Using descriptors of spirits similar to wine descriptions (though not as long) may help educate the consumer and heighten the anticipation of the drink. These descriptions can also be a way to take advantage of greater consumer interest in specific flavor trends occurring on the food menu.

### Top Cocktails (Q4 2009)

Margarita	699
Martini	550
Mojito	142
Coffee Cocktail	102
Cosmopolitan	101
Long Island Iced Tea	99
Pina Colada	74
Sangria	74
Bloody Mary	67
Daiquiri	58

### Top Growing Cocktails (Q4 2007 - Q4 2009)

Caipirinha	250%
Whiskey Sour	150%
Black Russian	100%
Hibiscus	100%
Mojito	92%
Champagne Cocktail	73%
Sea Breeze	67%
Whiskey and Cola	60%
Manhattan	53%
Tequila Sunrise	44%



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