

MINIMALIST TIKI

A Cocktail Wonk Look at Classic Libations
and the Modern Tiki Vanguard

MATT PIETREK &
CARRIE SMITH

PREVIEW



Minimalist Tiki: A (More Minimalist) Preview

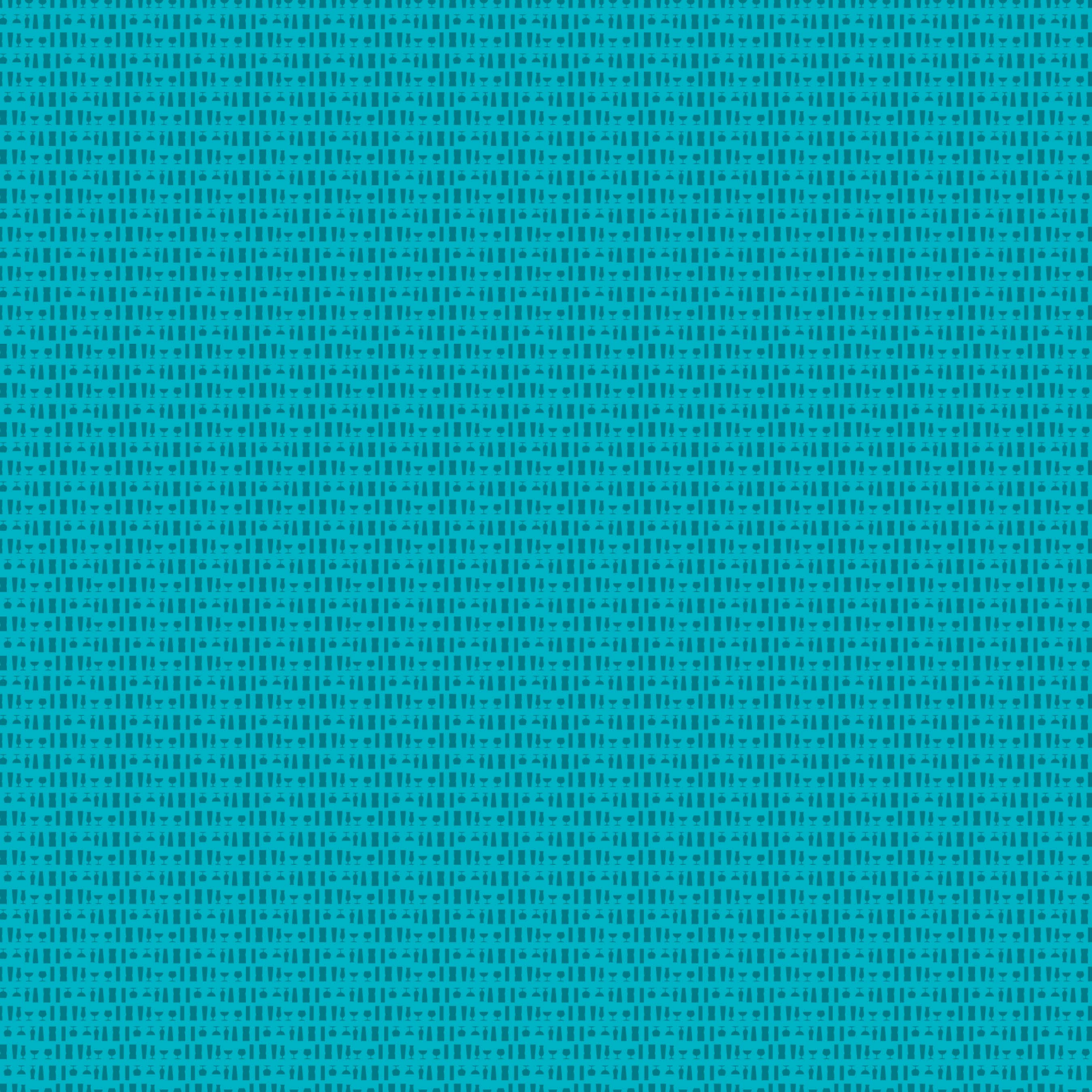
Welcome! What lies ahead of you in this PDF is a preview of our book, *Minimalist Tiki*—available only at <https://MinimalistTiki.com>.

The preview contains sample chapters from the first three sections of the book—“Minimalist Tiki,” “Beyond Minimalist Tiki,” and “The Rums of Tiki”—as well as a handful of the 120-plus recipes from today’s leading tiki-centric bartenders and bars.

The book’s complete index is available at the end, so you can see the breadth of topics, recipes, and ingredients found in the full print book. We hope this gets you started on your tiki path!

Cheers!

Matt Pietrek & Carrie Smith





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Minimalist Tiki: A Cocktail Wonk Look at Classic Libations and the Modern Tiki Vanguard

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Contents

Preface	vii
Acknowledgments	ix
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MINIMALIST TIKI	1
<i>One</i> Introduction to Minimalist Tiki	3
<i>Two</i> What Is Tiki?	7
<i>Three</i> Defining Minimalist Tiki	11
<i>Four</i> Creating Your Minimalist Setup	19
<i>Five</i> Minimalist Tiki Technique	49
BEYOND MINIMALIST TIKI	57
<i>Six</i> Expanding Your Liquor Portfolio	59
<i>Seven</i> Expanding Your Equipment	63
<i>Eight</i> Advanced Garnishes	71
<i>Nine</i> Making Your Own Syrups and Liqueurs	79
<i>Ten</i> Recipe Improvisation	85
THE RUMS OF TIKI	93
<i>Eleven</i> The Basics of Rum Production	97
<i>Twelve</i> Rum Categorizations	117
<i>Thirteen</i> Rum Brands and the Rum Industry: A Brief Overview	129
<i>Fourteen</i> Tiki Rum Recommendations	135
MOVERS & (COCKTAIL) SHAKERS	139
<i>Fifteen</i> The New Tiki Vanguard	141
<i>Sixteen</i> The Next Wave: Modern Tiki, Tropical & Rum Bars	221
<i>Seventeen</i> The Minimalist Tiki Classic Thirty...Modern Takes	263
Resources	281
Index	283



PREFACE

In 2007, my wife Carrie and I purchased a mid-century house in Seattle. Downstairs was a rough-around-the-edges rec-room bar nook. As part of renovating the house, we planned to upgrade with proper appliances and cabinets that would surely hold more liquor than I'd ever need. Months later, living in a tiny apartment while waiting for the renovation to finish, Carrie gave me a copy of *Beachbum Berry's Sippin' Safari*. I devoured the book cover to cover and was enraptured. I couldn't wait until the house was done, mostly so I could start using my new bar in earnest. Little did I realize then that my life would be transformed by a simple desire to make a few cocktails at home.

Over the following years, my passion for all manner of cocktails and spirits grew. However, rum and tropical drinks became an ever-increasing share of our evening libations. Instagram became a thing, and I started posting the occasional cocktail photo. My crude stabs at tiki recipes received the most acclaim, encouraging me to seek out more elaborate recipes, buy more exotic ingredients, and craft more attractive garnishes. My Instagram followers grew by leaps and bounds, further pushing me to learn more and share more. Instagram and Facebook tiki groups introduced me to countless friends around the world, equally passionate about making and enjoying great tiki drinks.

Concurrently, my fascination with all aspects of rum (not just in tiki drinks) went from a slow burn to full-on obsession. My bar cabinets were soon woefully inadequate to house my rum collection as it expanded from a dozen rums, to a hundred rums, and on to several hundred bottles. Our international travel became opportunities to bring home bottled treasures not found in the U.S.

In 2013, Carrie pushed me to share my passion with a wider audience. I started Cocktail Wonk with a mission to share what I've learned along my spirited journey. The goal: Going deeper than the average blog post and discovering unknown stories – but also having fun with it! Tiki recipes and technique intermingled with rum regulations, exploration of spirit flavor science, and distillery visits.

In July 2015, I wrote a piece titled "Minimalist Tiki: What you truly need to make the classics at home." It turned out to be quite popular, and four years later it remains among the most steadily read stories on the website. It is the genesis of the book you hold in your hands.

In 2018, after thirty years in the software industry, I decided to take a leap into the unknown. I was spending more time thinking about the next Cocktail Wonk story than about wrangling virtual machines in the cloud. Carrie and I left the security of professional careers to chase our dreams, doing work that we truly enjoy. For years, Carrie insisted that making "Minimalist Tiki" into a full-fledged book was a no-brainer, so creating this together was our first project.

In what follows, things may get a bit wonky at times, but I've learned that my readers enjoy that. Hopefully you'll find much here to educate and inspire you.

Cheers!
Matt Pietrek



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are countless people to give shout-outs to, but in the interest of not being played off the stage, I'll keep things brief.

Jeff Berry and Martin Cate – For being there at the beginning of the tiki revival movement and, more important, for sharing their knowledge through their writings and presentations. You may think of them as tiki legends, but both are also tropical shirt-wearing historians. It's hard work! Both have inspired me and taught me a great deal, and I'm honored to call them friends.

Rumba – Seattle's world-class rum bar. Rumba opened just as my interest in rum exploded, and our respective rum collections expanded side-by-side over many years. I'm thrilled to call the Rumba family – Kate, Jen, Connor, Jim, Tommy, Jason, Travis, Jessica, and the rest of the crew – my good friends. I'm equally thrilled that they let us use Rumba as a backdrop to photograph many of the amazing pictures in this book.

Lauren and Mike Blass – Our longtime friends who've contributed immensely in making this book look great! Lauren took on visual concept design and layout duties, and Mike provided the fantastic illustrations.

Justin Alford – Fellow Instagrammer Justin's cocktail photography is amazing. We knew all along that we wanted Justin to do photos for this book. Check out his work at @thewhiskeymcgee.

Carsten Vlierboom, Ed Rudisell, Nicholas King, Lance Surujbally, and "El Nova" – Each of them reviewed early drafts and provided tremendous feedback, for which I am most thankful.

Recipe contributors – A huge shout out to the many extremely talented individuals and bars that allowed us to share their recipes here. The plan was twofold:

- Provide you with tons of new tiki recipes to try.
- Bring much deserved attention to a wider swath of people and establishments at the vanguard of tiki today.

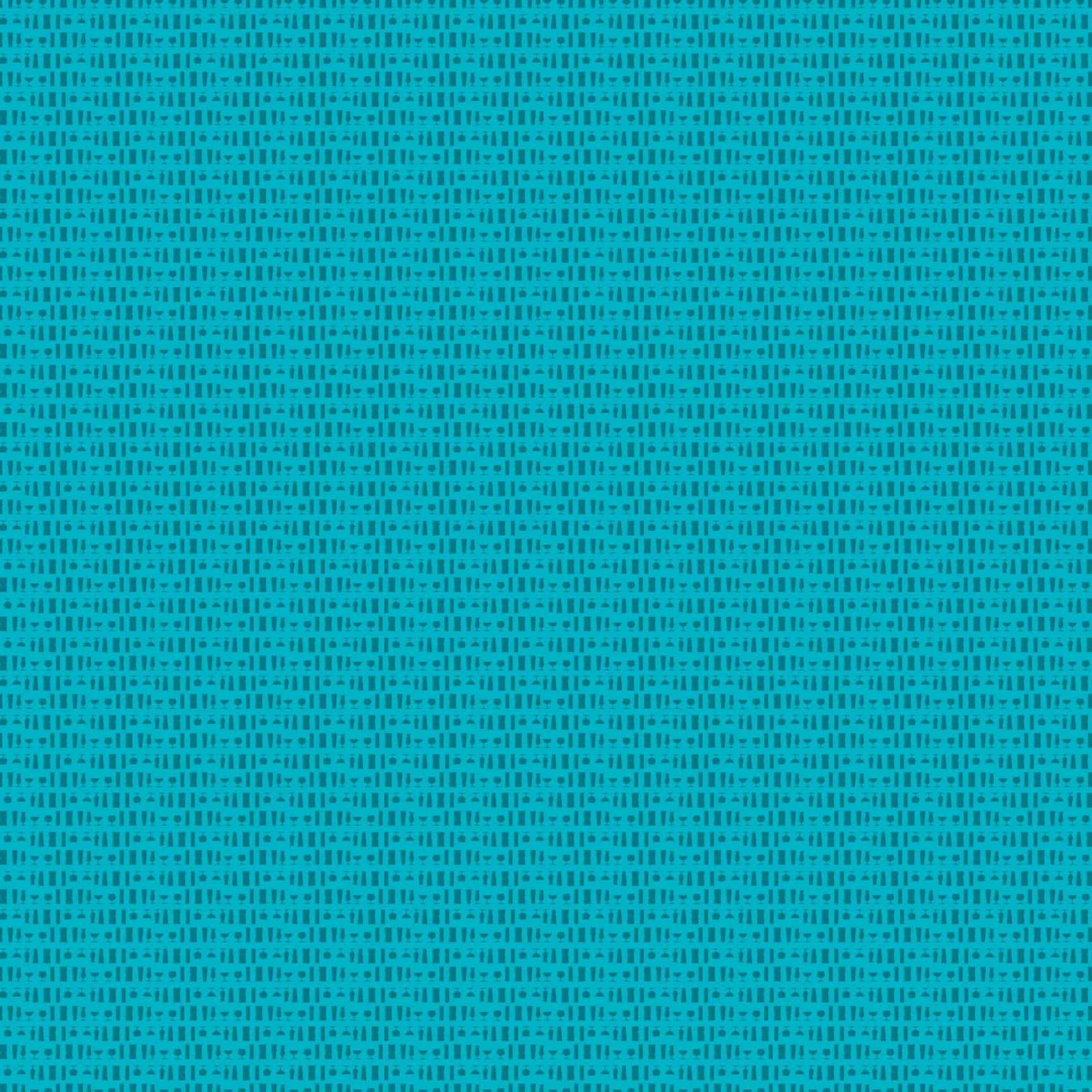
Jason Alexander – aka Tiki Commando. As the co-owner of Tacoma Cabana (now closed) and later Devil’s Reef in Tacoma, Washington, Jason is the epitome of a “tiki warrior.” He lives and breathes tiki. I can’t make his recipes as fast as he comes up with them. He respects and knows the classics backward and forward but isn’t bound by them. His ability to take a classic recipe like the Navy Grog and turn it up to eleven is unparalleled. (I call it Commando-fying a recipe.) We share a remarkably similar ethos regarding recipes, and he reviewed every word of this book. Jason knows not to hand me a menu at his bar – I’m drinking whatever he’s making.

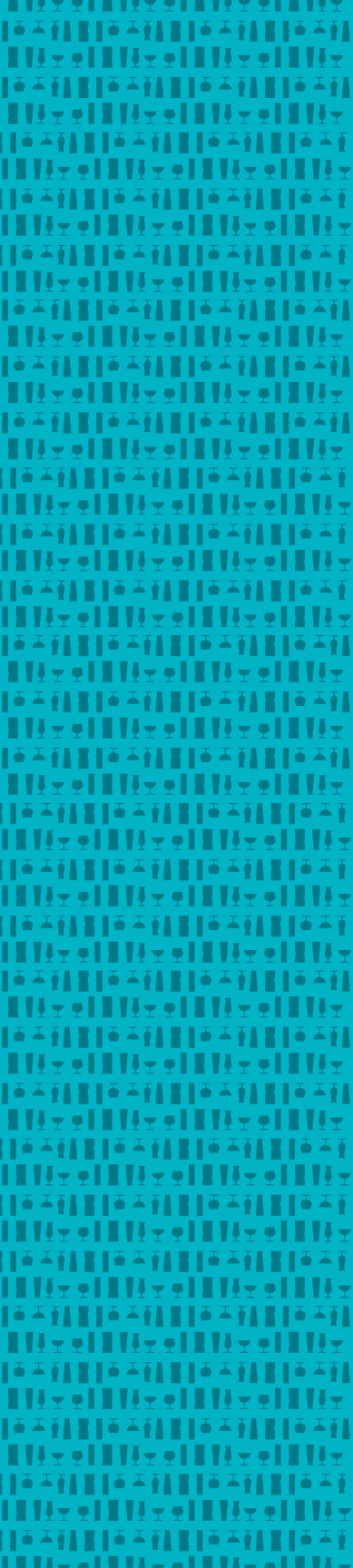
Finally, and most important, my wife, Carrie, aka Mrs. Cocktail Wonk, who’s taken every step of the *Minimalist Tiki* journey with me. Our once-normal vacations have been replaced by distillery tours, rum conventions, digging through library archives, and trekking from bar to bar. Her sharp eyes and professional copy-editing skills have saved me from countless mistakes over the years. Much of the success of Cocktail Wonk is due to her work behind the scenes.

Her name absolutely belongs on this book’s cover. In addition to providing critical feedback and whipping my words into shape, she’s been the overall project manager. Nearly everything you see in this book is the result of her superb sense of design and incredible attention to detail.

On my Instagram feed, most of the pictures are of two drinks, side by side – one for Carrie and one for me. It would be easier to just photograph one, but I insist that they appear together. In photos as in life, we’re a team. I can’t express how much I appreciate her support and value her contribution. None of this would have happened without her.







PART ONE

Minimalist Tiki



One

Introduction to Minimalist Tiki

The notion of “minimalist” tiki seems like the ultimate oxymoron: A classic tiki drink conjures elaborate garnishes – orchids, flaming lime shells, swizzle sticks – perched atop outlandish glassware filled to brimming with countless rums and exotic potions. There’s no disputing that on the cocktail spectrum, tiki drinks fall toward the outer extremes of complexity. But they’re worth the effort – just about everyone loves a well-balanced tiki cocktail exploding with tropical spice flavors.

Spend any time perched on a barstool at tiki temples such as Smuggler’s Cove, Latitude 29, or Lost Lake, and you’ll watch skilled bartenders wielding a vast collection of ingredients from all manner of bottles. Behind them likely looms a wall of rums from all corners of the Caribbean and beyond.

Even for the home bartender who’s comfortable crafting an old fashioned, Manhattan, or a daiquiri, facing off with these tiki masterpieces may seem a wee bit daunting. To the uninitiated, it can seem like every tiki recipe calls for dozens of esoteric rums and exotic liqueurs such as falernum and allspice dram that aren’t often found outside of the tiki realm.

The good news: Making great tiki isn’t hard and is absolutely possible at home, even in small spaces; the legion of home tiki aficionados Instagramming their latest libation is a colorful testament to this.

Minimalist Tiki begins by methodically analyzing tiki recipes and establishing core concepts, getting you on the path to tiki nirvana with



Mr. Bali Hai

a sane starting point that is easily achievable at home or in any competent drinking establishment.

Minimalist Tiki is foundational and incremental. Rather than beginning with a large, comprehensive list of every ingredient you might ever use (cherry heering, anyone?), you'll learn which ingredients, equipment, and techniques form the bedrock of tiki. From there, incrementally add to your foundation as your skill grows. Each addition opens up new avenues of tiki goodness.

Once you're comfortable with the Minimalist Tiki core principles, later chapters will steer you into more advanced topics, taking your creations to the next level. Master them and you might just open your own tiki palace!

The core of Minimalist Tiki centers on the classics – the beloved set of cocktails such as the Mai Tai, Jet Pilot, and Cobra's Fang, most of which originated during the golden era of tiki, the end of Prohibition through the early 1960s. But tiki doesn't rest on its laurels – the final section of the book transitions to modern takes from the vanguard of the new Tiki Revival. These bars and bartenders fully embrace the tiki credo in a big way, regularly creating and sharing new recipes.

There's no shortage of recipes within in these pages. All are focused on being accessible without the luxury of a molecular mixology kitchen. As a home tiki enthusiast with an extensive home bar, I'm keenly aware of the frustration of finding an interesting new recipe, then realizing it requires a quarter ounce of some incredibly esoteric ingredient. You'll find few recipes calling for exotic or complex ingredients within these pages. Minimalist and practicality are two sides of the same coin here.

Equally important is what this book doesn't set out to be.

First and foremost, this book is not a comprehensive introductory guide to home bartending, instructing you on how to hold a shaker or use a Hawthorne strainer. Great books such as Jeffery Morgenthaler's *The Bar Book* address these topics incredibly well. It would be a waste of time to attempt improving on them. Instead, this book assumes a basic level of familiarity with shakers, strainers, squeezing a lime, and knowing when to shake versus stir. These pages build on those basics with practical, hard-won wisdom specifically targeted at crafting excellent tiki drinks at home.

Second, this book assumes you're already somewhere along your tiki journey and have basic sense of its history and ethos. Indelible resources like Jeff "Beachbum" Berry's *Sippin' Safari* and Martin and Rebecca Cate's *Smuggler's Cove* cover those topics at award-winning length and depth. It would be foolish to not acknowledge both Martin and Jeff's enormous contributions to reviving tiki in the twenty-first century, and equally foolish to replicate their work here. You should absolutely own their words as well as this book!

Thus, this book makes no claim to be a definitive history of the Golden Age of Tiki or the tiki revival movements. It name-drops the Godfathers of Tiki – Donn Beach ("Don the Beachcomber") and Victor Bergeron ("Trader Vic") – with abandon, but you won't find biographies or obsessive details about who really invented the Mai Tai.

Rather, this book comprises:

- Hard-won knowledge from crafting countless recipes at my home bar
- A geeky look at the rums of tiki
- A collection of original recipes from some of the best tiki practitioners today

In short, a practical guide to bootstrapping your knowledge about crafting classic and modern tiki cocktails that both look and taste great!



Planter's Punch

A few notes that apply throughout this book:

- All liquid quantities in this book are in U.S. ounces, so apologies to those folks who work in milliliters.
- Alcoholic strength is given in ABV (alcohol by volume) rather than the U.S. proof system (ABV percent times two). Where U.S. proof is relevant, it's cited in parenthesis.
- When citing brands, I necessarily have a U.S.-centric view of what's available. I've tried to include brands found outside of the U.S. where I'm aware of them.



Two

What Is Tiki?

To set the stage for what this book encompasses, let's first establish what makes tiki drinks different from other cocktail styles, especially from other drinks associated with sun, sand, and vacation.

One of the original and most revered cocktail recipe templates, the sour is comprised of three basic elements:

- Spirit (rum, whiskey, brandy, etc.)
- Something sour
- Something sweet

In most cases, citrus provides the sour component, with lime or lemon juice as particularly common choices. The sweet component is usually a sweet syrup, a sweet liqueur, or both.

Let's construct a hypothetical sour cocktail following the pattern above:

0.5 oz sugar syrup, aka "simple syrup" (table sugar dissolved in water)

0.5 oz lime juice

2 oz rum

Shake with ice. Strain into a chilled coupe.

This particular pattern is known around the globe as a daiquiri. A well-made daiquiri is sublime, and hardly the frozen mess most people think of – JFK drank daiquiris the night he was elected president. Other popular cocktails following the sour pattern include the margarita (tequila, lime, and triple

sec liqueur) and the Sidecar (brandy, lemon, and triple sec liqueur).

But let's return to the daiquiri: rum, lime, sugar. This trio is the Holy Trinity of most drinks associated with escape and relaxation in tropical locales. Countless recipes, including most tiki drinks, derive from this trio. It wouldn't be out of line to describe tiki drinks like the Mai Tai or Jet Pilot as very elaborate daiquiris.

However, the daiquiri in and of itself isn't considered a tiki drink. Why not?



A classic daiquiri – very tasty, but not tiki

TIKI VS. TROPICAL

What differentiates a tiki recipe from a basic sour recipe or other tropical non-tiki drinks? There are no precise rules and no regulatory body regarding tiki. (Thank goodness!) But there's a shared consensus among tiki-philes that a proper tiki drink meets all or most of the following criteria:

- A fundamental sour pattern as the base (spirit, sour citrus, and something sweet)
- Contains one or more exotic syrups or liqueurs
- Well balanced (not too tart, not too sweet)
- Served over crushed ice unless served "up" in a coupe glass
- Served in intriguing vessels or glassware
- Festively garnished and visually appealing
- Created after 1934, when Donn Beach opened the first tiki bar

You could mix some rum, lime juice, and orgeat in a plastic tumbler filled with cloudy, crescent-shaped freezer ice, but is that really tiki? The Tiki gods would reply with a resounding no.

Let's go back to the daiquiri: It's a sour pattern, yes. But simple syrup isn't terribly exotic, nor is a coupe glass. Traditional daiquiris aren't usually festooned with orchids, pineapple fronds, and a swizzle stick. A well-made daiquiri is transcendent, but is it tiki? Given the "rules" above, it doesn't quite make the cut. However, if you swap the simple syrup for orgeat and cinnamon syrup and serve it over crushed ice in a tall glass, garnished with a pineapple frond, well...now you've ventured from tropical into tiki.

Notice that the list says nothing about orange or pineapple juice. These sweet fruit juices are frequently found in tiki but are not a hard requirement. When called for, they are typically used in small quantities. Many people have an impression that tiki drinks are mostly sweet juices and syrups, enough to give you



Piña Colada – also not tiki

cavities. But well-made tiki doesn't contain a breakfast-sized dose of juice. If you see a bar doing that in their "tiki" drinks, head for the door.

Finally, it should be clear what isn't a tiki recipe. A few recipes are commonly and mistakenly associated with tiki – the Piña Colada, for one. An excellently crafted and blended Piña Colada – rum, pineapple juice, coconut cream – is heavenly. But viewed through the tiki criteria above, it fails an essential criterion: There's no sour note, no lemon or lime to balance out the cream of coconut sweetness. The same goes for the

Painkiller, essentially a Piña Colada with the addition of orange juice and using a heavier rum.

Tiki purists will say that the Singapore Sling isn't technically a tiki drink, although from looking at its ingredients, it seems to qualify. So then, why not? The original recipe dates to 1915, well before Donn Beach launched the Tiki era in 1934. The same logic applies to the Queens Park Swizzle, a 1920s recipe that also looks like tiki at first glance. Some folks call these recipes proto-tiki; other people say stop obsessing and just enjoy your drink.

A recipe that's harder to pin down as tiki is the Jungle Bird, crafted with rum, lime, pineapple juice, Campari, and simple syrup. The ingredient list seems to match up with the tiki ethos; however, Campari wasn't a mainstay of golden era tiki recipes. The suggested garnish of pineapple fronds and a pineapple wedge seems festive enough, but the traditional serve is over a large-format ice cube, rather than crushed ice. Yet the Jungle Bird looms as one of the most successful recipes to illustrate how the classic tiki palette can be thoughtfully augmented with mainstay ingredients of the modern craft cocktail movement.

Odds are, any good tiki bar worth their navy-strength rum can craft a great Daiquiri, Singapore Sling, Piña Colada, or Jungle Bird. These recipes are popular for a reason, and tiki bars are usually happy to serve them. Just know that certain tropical recipes lay somewhere outside the boundaries of tiki, should you encounter a purist seated on the next barstool.

At the end of the day, all that matters is enjoying what you drink. But in the next chapter we'll make some hard choices, culling eighty years' worth of tiki recipes to a canonical list of classics. From this list, the Minimalist Tiki guidance emerges.



Three

Defining Minimalist Tiki

Minimalist Tiki is about determining and acquiring the items used most often for crafting the tiki classics. While you can certainly approach your tiki haphazardly, buying spirits and ingredients ad hoc, the Minimalist Tiki ethos is a thoughtful, easy to understand, analytical approach. The ultimate goal: A concise list of ingredients, equipment, and accessories needed to start crafting no-compromise tiki classics without draining your wallet and filling your shelves with rarely used bottles.

Begin with those and, as your experience grows, add more items to execute more recipes outside of the core. Ultimately, with enough space and enthusiasm, you'll be able to make any recipe you come across. But starting small and building incrementally helps give you that confidence.

A natural question at this juncture is, "What defines a tiki classic?" For this exercise, I reviewed many recipes from tiki's golden age, 1934 to the 1960s. In part, classics are the recipes that perennially pop up on bar menus, in publications, and on social media. Naturally the list is biased by my own experience and tastes; it's likely that no two lists of "The Classics" would be the same. Everybody has different tastes! Regardless of which list you use, the same set of core ingredients like lime juice and Jamaican rum will assuredly rise to the top.

Another concern is sample size. If the list has too few recipes to analyze, for instance:

- Mai Tai
- Jet Pilot
- Navy Grog

Then passion fruit syrup, a common tiki ingredient, won't appear at all.

Keep the same number of recipes but change them to:

- Cobra's Fang
- Hurricane
- Saturn

and you'll miss out on simple syrup, another very common ingredient. In short, the core needs enough recipes for the results to be statistically relevant.

For my list, I included obvious classics like the Mai Tai, the Zombie, and the Jet Pilot, but also made room for other recipes well-loved by tiki cognoscenti. By including thirty recipes the list becomes broadly representative of the overall tiki canon without being cluttered with esoteric oddities.

A note before we proceed: The list includes a somewhat controversial and not strictly a tiki recipe—The Painkiller.

The Painkiller lacks a sour component, and its 1971 inception postdates tiki's golden age. Some bartenders claim it's an unbalanced mess. However, many people enjoy its coconutty tropical vibe, and it is included in Jeff Berry's Beachbum Berry Total Tiki app, considered an authority on classic tiki cocktails. The Painkiller's inclusion here is a small concession to the non-purists, and it doesn't radically change the Minimalist Tiki Classic Thirty results. Most tiki bars can make you a Painkiller, a Pina Colada, or Singapore Sling, none of which are strictly tiki.



Where there's smoke, there's tiki fire

MINIMALIST TIKI CLASSIC THIRTY

With the above in mind, let's unveil the Minimalist Tiki Classic Thirty:

<i>151 Swizzle (1940s)</i>	<i>Mr. Bali Hai</i>
<i>Bali Bali</i>	<i>Navy Grog (1941)</i>
<i>Bolo</i>	<i>Painkiller</i>
<i>Chief Lapu Lapu</i>	<i>Planter's Punch (1937)</i>
<i>Cobra's Fang (1937)</i>	<i>Polynesian Paralysis</i>
<i>Cocoanut Grove</i>	<i>Port Light</i>
<i>Doctor Funk</i>	<i>Royal Hawaiian Mai Tai (1953)</i>
<i>Donga Punch</i>	<i>Rum Barrel (1940s)</i>
<i>Eastern Sour</i>	<i>Saturn</i>
<i>El Diablo</i>	<i>Scorpion</i>
<i>Fog Cutter (1940s)</i>	<i>Shrunken Skull</i>
<i>Hurricane (1940s)</i>	<i>Suffering Bastard</i>
<i>Jet Pilot (1958)</i>	<i>Test Pilot</i>
<i>Mai Tai (1944)</i>	<i>Three Dots and a Dash (1940s)</i>
<i>Montego Bay</i>	<i>Zombie (1934)</i>

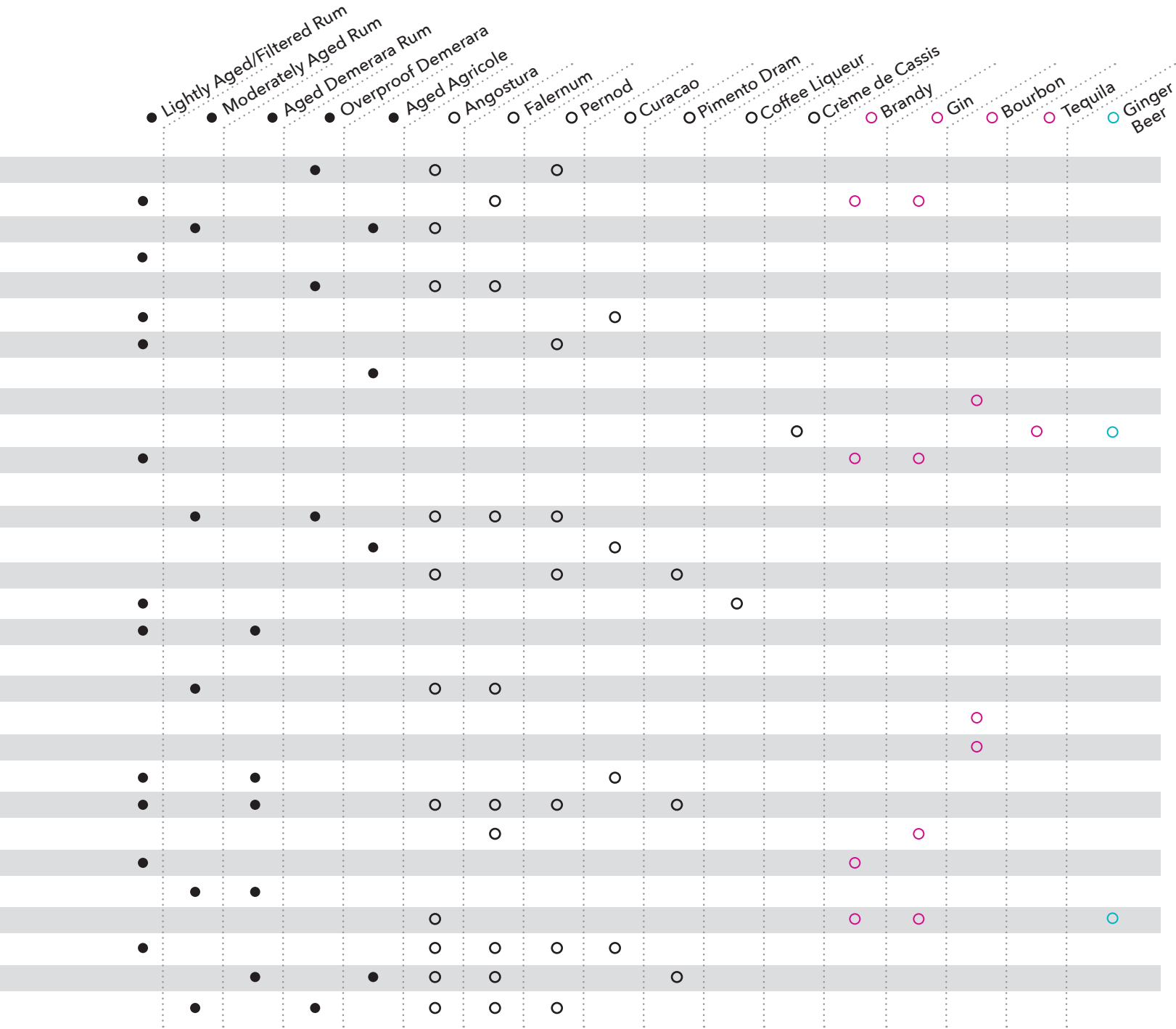
With our classic recipes in hand, we can next identify the ingredients that appear most often. For brevity's sake and flow, the complete recipe for each is not included here; you can find them online or in tiki-focused apps. One important note: Many recipes such as the *Zombie* evolved substantially over the years or had a slightly different spin depending on the bar. For the sake of uniformity, the data below references the recipes as they appear in *Beachbum Berry's Total Tiki* app, including the year of variation.

So now, let's get down to the details of learning which ingredients occur most often. A simple matrix makes the math easy. Each recipe is a row, while each ingredient is a column. The quantity needed in each recipe doesn't matter, just that it's used.

RECIPES

	Lime Juice	Orange Juice	Lemon Juice	Pineapple Juice	Grapefruit Juice	Simple Syrup	Orgeat Syrup	Passion Fruit Syrup	Grenadine	Honey Mix	Cinnamon Syrup	Cream of Coconut	Aged Jamaican Rum
151 Swizzle (1940s)	●					●							
Bali Bali	●	●		●		●	●						●
Bolo	●			●			●			●			
Chief Lapu Lapu		●	●			●	●						●
Cobra's Fang (1937)	●	●					●						
Cocoanut Grove	●										●		
Doctor Funk	●							●					
Donga Punch	●			●						●			
Eastern Sour		●	●			●	●						
El Diablo	●												
Fog Cutter (1940s)		●	●				●						
Hurricane (1940s)			●				●						●
Jet Pilot (1958)	●			●						●			●
Mai Tai (1944)	●				●	●							●
Montego Bay	●			●						●			●
Mr. Bali Hai			●	●		●							●
Navy Grog (1941)	●			●						●			●
Painkiller		●	●								●		●
Planter's Punch (1937)	●					●		●					●
Polynesian Paralysis		●	●	●		●	●						
Port Light			●				●	●					
Royal Hawaiian Mai Tai (1953)	●	●	●	●		●	●						●
Rum Barrel (1940s)	●	●		●	●			●	●				●
Saturn			●				●	●					
Scorpion		●	●				●						
Shrunken Skull	●							●					
Suffering Bastard	●				●								
Test Pilot	●												●
Three Dots & a Dash (1940s)	●	●							●				
Zombie (1934)	●			●				●		●			●

● = Juices ● = Sweetener ● = Rum ○ = Liqueurs & Bitters ○ = Base Spirits ○ = Ginger Beer



One of the challenges of this exercise is that the rums are specified in different ways. What one recipe calls a “light Cuban style rum,” another might call “Havana Club 3 Year.” Likewise, one recipe calls for “overproof Demerara” while another states “Lemon Hart 151.”

Mapping the different ways to specify rums into a small, common set can be challenging. For this exercise, I’ve grouped the rums found in the Minimalist Tiki Classic Thirty into a small number of buckets, e.g. “aged Jamaican” or “overproof Demerara.” Without doing this, the matrix would have dozens of columns just for rum!

With enough experience, you’ll be able to read any recipe and confidently select a rum from your stock. However, until you’ve reached that point, the recipes also include guidance as to which category each specified rum belongs to. In Part Three, we’ll dive headlong into the topic of rums to help you understand the hows and whys of the Minimalist Tiki rum categories.

With all the homework completed, we present the all-important summary data from our efforts:

Don’s Secret Ingredient Blends

Starting with Donn Beach, tiki bartenders have a tradition of combining multiple ingredients into “spices” or a “mix.” Beach did it to keep his recipes secret, even from his own bartenders. At home, you may want to make these on demand as needed.

Don’s Mix: Two parts grapefruit juice to one part cinnamon syrup.

Don’s Spices No.2: Equal parts vanilla syrup and pimento/allspice liqueur.

RUMS

- Aged Jamaican Rum (14/30)
- Lightly Aged/Filtered Rum (11/30)
- Moderately Aged Rum (5/30)
- Aged Demerara Rum (5/30)
- Overproof Demerara Rum (4/30)
- Aged Agricole Rum (3/30)

OTHER BASE SPIRITS

- Brandy or Cognac (4/30)
- Gin (4/30)
- Bourbon or Whiskey (3/30)
- Tequila (1/30)

LIQUEURS & BITTERS

- Angostura Bitters (11/30)
- Falernum (9/30)
- Pernod/Herbsaint/Absinthe (8/30)
- Curaçao or orange liqueur (4/30)
- Pimento Dram/Allspice Dram (3/30)
- Coffee Liqueur (1/30)
- Crème de Cassis (1/30)

SYRUPS

- Simple Syrup (10/30)
- Orgeat (7/30)
- Passion Fruit (7/30)
- Grenadine (6/30)
- Honey Mix (5/30)
- Cinnamon (3/30)
- Cream of Coconut (2/30)

CITRUS

- Lime (20/30)
- Orange (11/30)
- Lemon (10/30)
- Pineapple (7/30)
- Grapefruit (6/30)

DEFINING COMPONENT CATEGORIES

In the Classic Thirty matrix, notice that similar types of ingredients are grouped together into these categories:

- Rums
- Other base spirits (gin, cognac, etc.)
- Juices
- Liqueurs and bitters
- Syrups (non-alcoholic)
- Miscellaneous

With even a cursory look at the numbers, it's clear which ingredients are common to the tiki canon. Lime juice is used in two-thirds of all recipes! Simple syrup is the most often used sweetener, in ten recipes.

Aged Jamaican rum leads the spirit pack, followed closely by lightly aged and filtered rum. In the liqueurs and bitters category, Angostura is clearly a tiki staple. Pernod, an anise-based liqueur, also represents. Surprised? A few drops of Pernod are a calling card in many classic Donn Beach recipes.

Taking the most popular ingredient in each category, we can quickly test if our data reflects reality. Putting aside the non-rum base spirits, the list is this:

- Aged Jamaican rum
- Simple syrup
- Lime juice
- Angostura bitters

In theory, using these ingredients together should constitute the ultimate Minimalist Tiki recipe. In fact, a recipe known as Stephen Remsberg's Planter's Punch matches the list perfectly:

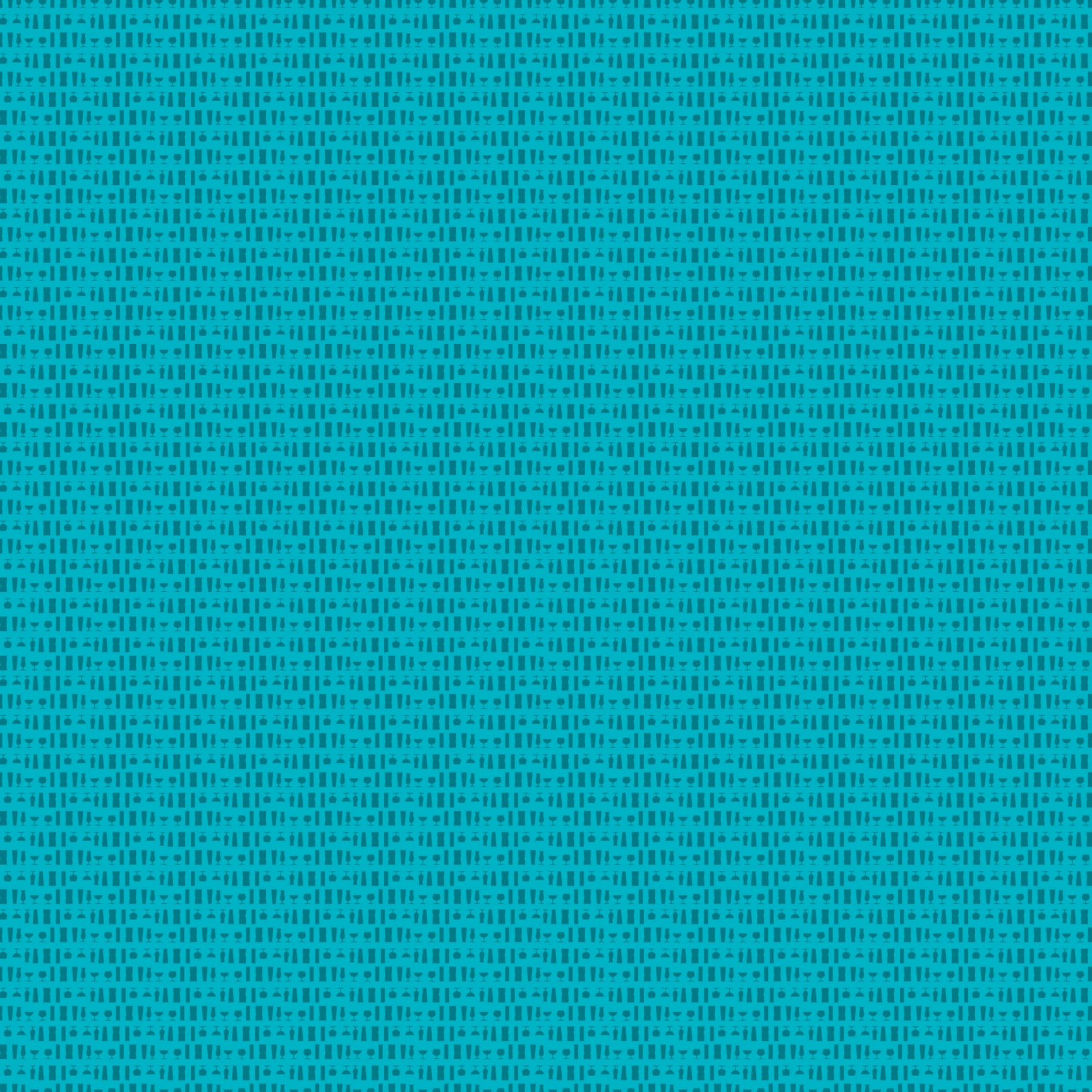
- 3 dashes Angostura bitters
- 0.75 oz lime juice
- 1 oz simple syrup
- 3 oz aged Jamaican rum

Now that we're confident that we're on the right track, we'll use our data in the next chapter to create the initial Minimalist Tiki toolbox.



Stephen Remsberg Collector Extraordinaire

Who is Stephen Remsberg, and why does he have his own punch? He's a New Orleans-based collector with one of the largest vintage rum collections in the world. He has obsessively researched rums and experimented with recipes for many decades. It was his dedication to collecting and researching vintage rums that helped Jeff "Beachbum" Berry crack the code of many of the vintage tiki recipes resurrected in the modern era – an effort certainly worthy of an eponymous cocktail!





PART TWO

Beyond Minimalist Tiki

For some, the concepts we've covered so far encompass all they need to enjoy the occasional well-made tiki creation. For others, tiki becomes an obsession and a way of life – original recipes, an ever-growing rum collection, specialized equipment, a mini-refrigerator dedicated to tiki syrups, and shelves overflowing with tiki mugs and exotic glassware. It's akin to the difference between an expert home cook and a foodie whose kitchen is the envy of a restaurant: Half a dozen sous vide machines, dozens of pots, and hundreds of cookbooks.

If tiki obsession is your desire, this section is for you. It won't take you as far as converting your basement into a tiki chateau, but it will give you a good push down that path as it relates to making ever more complicated concoctions.



Seven

Expanding Your Equipment

While Minimalist Tiki gets you by with two or three types of glassware, a handheld juice press, and a Lewis bag, once you're fully committed to tiki taking over your bar, there are plenty more fun things to spend your money on that make things more enjoyable and efficient.

EXPANDED DRINKWARE

Earlier I posited that two types of glassware will cover most of your basic tiki needs: the double old-fashioned and the cooler glass. But tiki should be a feast for the eyes as well as the tongue. In going beyond Minimalist Tiki, serving up your libations in dramatic glassware, thoughtfully matched to the drink, adds to its overall awesomeness. You might just gain an Instagram following for your creations if you do it well.

CUSTOM MUGS

Tiki mugs are big business. Many high-end tiki bars sell custom mugs, and you can certainly find inexpensive, mass-produced mugs on the retail market. But if you're really into tiki, rare or exotic mugs add to the coolness quotient. Custom mugs can become the most visible part of a bar's branding: Countless small variations of the Smuggler's Cove "Kuhiko" mug are on bar shelves worldwide, but they're an instantly recognizable calling



Tiki mug creatures

cards. You'll see them peeking out from the backbars of some of the world's best bars, regardless of whether they're tiki or not.

Owning mugs from your favorite tiki bars is just plain fun and brings back memories of your visit. Luckily, most bars offer them for sale. (No stealing tiki mugs. It's not cool!) Just realize that ceramic mugs hide the drink's contents. Sometimes that's helpful, for instance hiding the not particularly appealing brown color of recipes with dark rums. But a mug can also hide the pleasing hues of a recipe, such as the vibrant red of an Angostura Colada. If you're photographing your creations and want them to be more than just a picture of the mug itself, you'll need to concoct some garnish eye-candy to tag along.

A clear glass mug worth considering for your collection is the iconic Disney "Polynesian Resort" vessel. They're relatively shallow, almost like a cross between a footed bowl and a tiki mug. They look great, are practically indestructible, and their wide mouth is great for large, elaborate garnishes.

UNUSUAL GLASSES

Tiki drinks look great in dramatic glassware. You've seen plenty in bars, but rarely in a home setting. Two

well-known examples are hurricane and pilsner glasses, both tall with a pronounced "foot." Always get real glass vessels, not the cheap plastic versions. Tiki should be exotic, but classy. Plastic just doesn't create that same vibe.

A favorite vessel that I get many questions about when I feature it on Instagram is Libbey's seventeen-ounce pineapple glass. It's very sturdy and looks great when garnished with palm fronds and orchids.

I aim to always have at least four of each type of glass on my bar shelves – I try to use all the same glassware in every round of drinks I make. When looking for interesting glassware, consider browsing your local restaurant supply store. You might find something you didn't know existed, possibly at a great price.



Brandy snifters

BRANDY SNIFTER

Odd as it might seem, a brandy snifter packed full of ice and tropical goodness is a signature tiki move. You'll want snifters of at least sixteen ounces to hold all the



Vintage metal swizzle cup

liquid plus a generous amount of ice. However, with a very large snifter, you'll spend copious amounts of time filling it with crushed ice, especially if you're crushing via Lewis bag.

If you're into photographing your masterpieces, wait a bit after packing your snifter with ice before snapping your photo. You'll usually get a thin ice crust of frost on the outside of the glass. I find it adds to the visual appeal, making the drink look extra inviting.

Pro tip: With a snifter's unusual shape, it's easy for small chunks of crushed ice to miss the opening and stick to the side of the glass. Rather than brushing them off, consider leaving them on. It heightens the super-chilled appearance.

METAL SWIZZLE CUPS

A throwback to tiki's midcentury past, these tall, outward tapering metal cups vaguely resemble a footless Pilsner glass made from brushed aluminum. They're synonymous with the 151 Swizzle recipe. While Cocktail Kingdom sells a small-ish recreation, you may find some originals on eBay or in vintage shops. Be aware that these cups usually don't hold a large volume, so they're best for smaller recipes. Like the 151 Swizzle!

THE TRULY ODDBALL, NOT INTENDED FOR DRINKING VESSEL

Be on the lookout for interesting, food safe vessels that visually pop. A bright blue recipe and a crazy garnish might look great in an Erlenmeyer flask. Or perhaps an unusual small vase – just make sure it's lead-free and food safe! I've repurposed my wife's midcentury, open air plant vase as a tiki vessel and received a huge response on Instagram.



Countertop clear ice maker

ICE EQUIPMENT

When going hardcore tiki nerd, a good ice maker pumping out plenty of clear cubes becomes an essential tool. Under-counter models typically cost a few thousand dollars and need to be connected to both a water source and a drain. But the first time you reach in to pull out a big scoop of perfect, clear ice, you'll never go back to bad freezer ice or ice-cube trays. Having a ready supply of good ice at your fingertips is truly a game changer. The small cubes from a dedicated ice maker also crush more consistently than half-moon ice or large tray cubes.

While you can get by with a Lewis bag and mallet for Minimalist Tiki, if you're making a lot of drinks, consider an electric ice crusher. A Lewis bag gives you much more control over the end product, but sometimes speed is more important than perfectly shaped ice.

Note: If your ice is too small, some cubes will slip through uncrushed. Slightly larger cubes work better in these machines. A particularly popular model with tiki enthusiasts is the Waring IC70, which retails for around \$90. It has a hopper that you fill with ice, and a removable bin at the bottom where the crushed ice collects.

Hand-cranked ice crushers are often of limited capacity and not much better than using a Lewis bag. If you're making tiki day in and day out, a good electric crusher creates one less task to deal with.

Lastly, while you can get by with a single ice scoop, it's worth getting an extra, smaller scoop to use specifically for filling glasses and mugs with smaller openings. They're inexpensive and help get more ice in the glass and less on your counter.

SPINDLE BLENDERS

Although a good shaker is the tried-and-true workhorse of any bar, many tiki bartenders swear by their spindle blenders, aka "milkshake makers." Unlike traditional kitchen blenders, spindle blenders have a fluted agitator disk rather than blades. A spindle blender rapidly stirs and aerates drinks rather than pulverizing the ice into a slushie. Pineapple juice works particularly well with spindle blenders, as it froths up to create a nice foam head.

Besides speed, another advantage of spindle blenders over shakers is that you can just pour your drink straight into the serving vessel, rather than straining over fresh ice. Since the agitator isn't breaking up the ice, use crushed ice rather than cubes in the preparation. Three or four seconds of blending is all that's needed.

Pro tip: In his *Smuggler's Cove* book, Martin Cate suggests using a few large "agitator" cubes in addition to the crushed ice when using the spindle blender.

If you go the spindle blender route, it's key to use the correct amount of crushed ice so that you can pour the entire contents into the serving vessel. The more ice you use, the more dilution you'll get. It's easy to use too much ice, or not enough, especially if you're working with many different vessel sizes. If the finished drink doesn't fill the serving vessel completely, top it up with more crushed ice.

Home grade spindle blenders start at around \$40. Unless you're running a commercial bar, you don't need an industrial grade version, which can cost several hundred dollars.

If a spindle blender is a bit too much but you still want the appearance and taste, try a battery powered handheld frother (normally used for foaming lattes), which retail for around \$20. Bonjour makes a version that works well. Make sure it has a fluted agitator and not a wire whisk. Prepare the drink in the vessel as you normally would, but instead fill only ninety-five percent full with ice and liquid. Use the frother for ten or twenty seconds, then top it up with more ice.



Spindle blender in action

JUICING EQUIPMENT

While handheld presses are great for making a drink or two, there are times you'll need lots of citrus juice. Also, juicing a large orange or grapefruit efficiently with a handheld press can be challenging. You'll often wind up cutting the fruit into many sections, yet still leave a lot of juice behind.

For these situations, a power assist is helpful. Electric juicers can save the day. Budget electric juicers typically use a rotating reamer cone: Simply cut the citrus in half and press it on the rotating reamer. Despite the strainer below, the juice will have a fair amount of pulp, so you'll want to filter it with a fine mesh strainer.

One advantage of powered reamers is that they don't extract bitter oils from the citrus peels like hand presses can. Reamers can take a while to clean, so I don't break out mine unless I'm juicing for a crowd.

While reamers work fine for round citrus, they can't do odd-shaped fruit like pineapples or passion fruit. Fresh squeezed pineapple juice is nirvana, but it's hard to accomplish without the right equipment.

Juicers capable of working with all types of fruits and vegetable are of two varieties, centripetal or masticating. Centripetal juicers use a rapidly spinning plate covered with sharp studs to shred what you feed it, spinning the juice out the bottom through a mesh strainer. After using a centripetal juicer for many years, I realized I wasn't happy with how it performed, particularly with pineapple. The pulp was still quite wet (meaning juice was left behind), and the juice in the container was foamy.

Masticating juicers use a slowly rotating auger to grind up (or "chew," hence the name) the produce and press the juice through a very fine screen strainer. The pulp is noticeably drier than with a centripetal juicer and isn't frothy. There's much more juice as well! A large

pineapple yields about a quart of juice, which lasts a very long time unless you're tiki-ing for the masses. You can also freeze some in ice cube trays for later use. (This works with any kind of excess juice.)

With lemons and limes, I get around forty percent more juice from a masticating juicer than when using a hand press. When juicing oranges and grapefruits, however, I first peel the skin from the segments prior to running them through the masticating juicer, so as to not get the skin oils in the juice.

PINEAPPLE JUICING WITH A MASTICATING JUICER

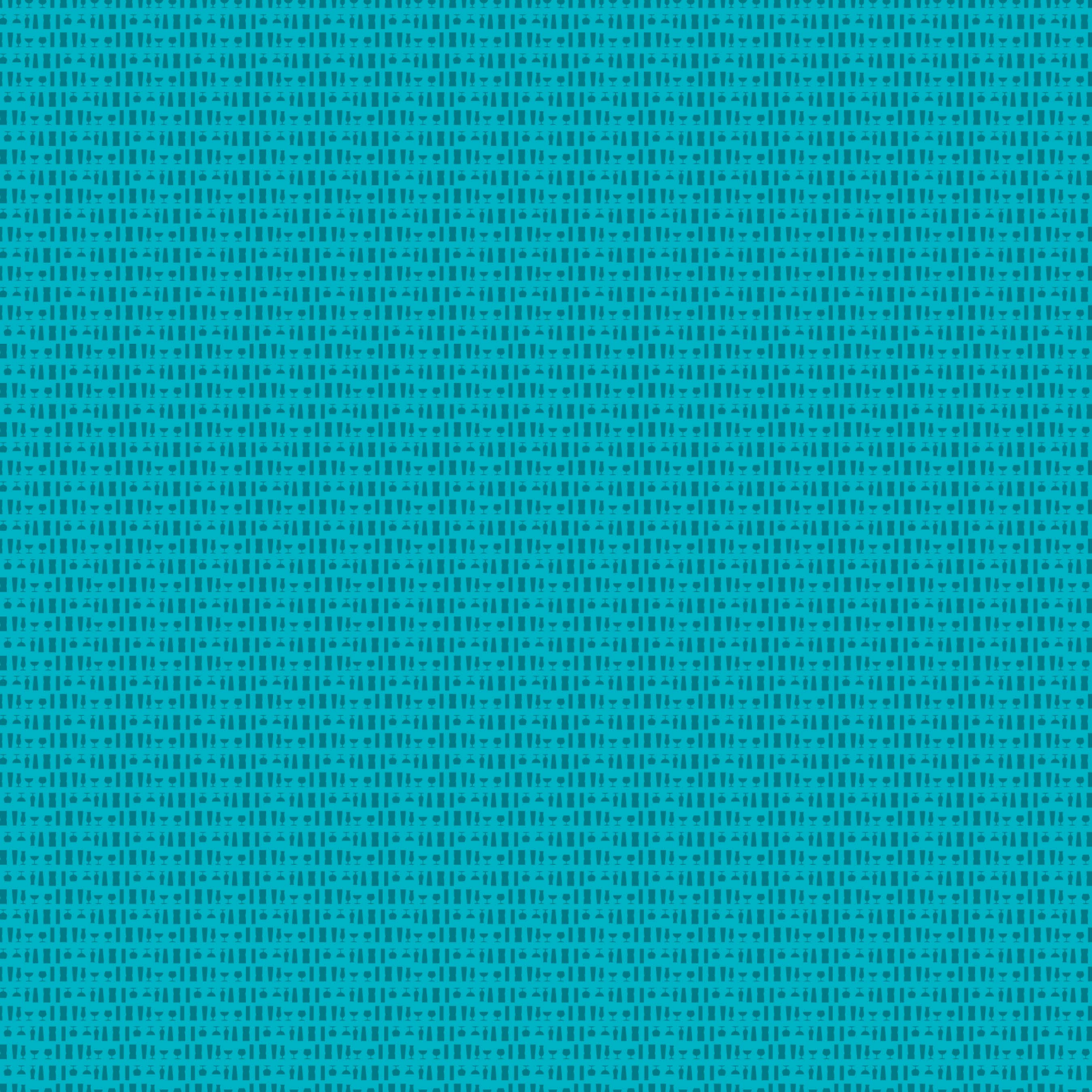
To juice a pineapple, first cut off the top and bottom using a large serrated bread knife. (Save a slice or two for later use as pineapple wedge, if desired. The cut fruit will last a few days in a zipper-lock bag in the refrigerator.) Stand the pineapple upright and, using a sawing motion, cut downward along the curve of the fruit to remove slices of the skin, while leaving as much inner flesh as possible. No need to be meticulous about removing the skin – a few small spots won't hurt the juicer or your end product.

You should now have a pineapple cylinder. Laying the pineapple on its side, cut it in half lengthwise, then in quarters, then eighths. Continue till each wedge is small enough to feed into your juicer.

If you're the kitchen gadget type, you can use a handheld pineapple coring tool that screws down through the pineapple to create a long pineapple spiral, separating out both the core and the skin. The spiral can be easily fed into the juicer, but a corer can leave quite a bit of juiceable pineapple flesh behind with the skin.



Masticating juicers make quick work of pineapple!





PART THREE

The Rums of Tiki

THE TIKI/RUM CONNECTION

Rum and tiki have been inseparable since tiki's inception in 1934. In fact, some say that the birth of tiki was fueled by the ready availability of inexpensive Caribbean rum flooding the U.S. in the immediate aftermath of Prohibition's repeal in 1933.

In 1944, just ten years later, Trader Vic pulled a bottle of Wray & Nephew seventeen-year aged rum from his bar shelf to create the first Mai Tai, now widely considered the consummate tiki drink. While these recipes generally don't call for extravagant rums, a bottle of Wray & Nephew 17 remains the holy grail of tiki enthusiasts. Just a few bottles exist in the world, and if you could buy one, it would likely cost \$50,000 or more.

But it's not just that one bottle drawing the attention of hardcore enthusiasts. They're always on the lookout for other rare rums, like a pre-Castro Bacardi made in Cuba, or perhaps Lemon Hart Jamaican rum from the 1930s. Why this obsession with super old rums? Tiki enthusiasts crave authenticity. They desire to experience what a recipe might have tasted like in the 1940s or 1950s, and modern rums often don't replicate those flavors. Beginning in the 1950s, many rum brands went into decline or out of business as consumer tastes migrated to lighter, less intense, less "rummy" flavors. Finding a high-hogo Jamaican rum on your local liquor store shelf



Rum collection extraordinaire!

in the 1990s was a challenge. Early tiki enthusiasts resorted to searching for old bottles, affectionately known as “dusties,” in small liquor stores in out of the way locales, at estate sales, or in their parents’ basements.

It was one such enthusiast, in collaboration with a prolific rum collector, who led the effort to unlock many tiki recipes of yore for modern enthusiasts. In the 1990s, Jeff Berry, then working as a script doctor in Los Angeles, spent his spare time unearthing recipes from the little black notebooks of the original tiki bartenders. He was stymied in recreating certain recipes calling for rums that hadn’t been produced in decades. This was pre-Google, after all.

Eventually, he connected with a New Orleans rum collector named Stephen Remsberg (see sidebar in Chapter 3) who had spent decades collecting rums from estate sales and other sources. Through a series of snail mail exchanges, Berry and Remsberg pieced together the historical styles of these rums, as well as their closest modern equivalents.

Luckily for tiki lovers, the last decade has brought forth a wave of new and interesting rums, both revived brands and new offerings that unabashedly bring flavor to the table. In particular, lovers of Jamaican funk now have many ways to get hogo-licious, a difficult task only a decade ago. Brands such as Smith & Cross, Rum Fire, Hamilton, and Worthy Park bring the funk in a way that the more elegant and refined Appleton Estate rums, also from Jamaica, simply don’t.

Tiki enthusiasts’ appetite for collecting and enjoying rum doesn’t stop with rums just for making cocktails. Many are full-on rum collectors, purchasing bottles costing hundreds or even thousands of dollars, in some cases. Rum collections with several hundred unique bottles are more common than you think, and collectors trade notes on social media groups on where to find

super exotic and limited-edition rums. It’s a good bet that if you surveyed everybody with more than one hundred unique rums in their personal collection, half or more would call themselves tiki enthusiasts.

Many of these rum bottles will never find their contents within a cocktail shaker, and that’s just fine. Tiki shirt-wearing enthusiasts are happy to debate the finer points of continental versus tropical aging of a \$250 bottle of twenty-five-year aged rum while enjoying a round of Jet Pilots at a tiki conference. If you think about it, it’s something incredible: No other spirit crosses communities like rum does with tiki. What sort of cocktail conventions do bourbon drinkers go to? What type of shirts do cognac drinkers wear when they get together? Good questions.

Having established that a passion for both tiki and rum are inextricably linked, let’s learn more about rum, especially the bottles that are the backbone of tiki.



Column still at Privateer Rum, Massachusetts

Twelve

Rum Categorizations

Think about your vehicle for a moment. If someone asked what kind of car you drive, how would you answer? You likely wouldn't answer "red" or "imported." You also wouldn't reply, "Aluminum frame, two door, four cylinders, with a front-mounted engine." As oddly specific as that sounds, it might not differentiate a Mini Cooper from a pickup truck. Even specifying the brand doesn't help. In stating Chevrolet or BMW, you could be referring to a super sporty two-door coupe or an offroad-ready SUV.

We all use many ways to categorize vehicles – color, manufacturer, size, country of origin, intended use – and we instinctively use the appropriate category as needed. When waiting for our ride-share to arrive, we probably care more about the color, not whether it was made in Japan versus Brazil. But when it's time to register that vehicle, the make, model, and year are paramount.

The need for multiple ways to categorize things applies equally well in the world of rum. Rum drinkers commonly specify rums by terms like white, Jamaican, pot still, English style, and overproof, yet each of those terms refers to a completely different categorization. The problem with these long-standing rum category names is that they often don't convey the sort of information we need, especially when it comes to recipes where flavor characteristics are paramount.

Let's look at some popular rum categorizations to see what's good and not so good about them.



Color does not imply age. Bottle on left: sixteen years. On right: approximately two years.

BY COLOR

The color of a rum has absolutely no bearing on its taste, no reflection on how long it's been aged, where it originates, or its alcohol content. Specifying a rum by its color makes as much sense as selecting a vehicle by just its color, with no other information.

So-called “white,” “silver,” or “light” rums may be unaged or may have years of aging prior to carbon filtration. It's ridiculous to compare an unaged white rum with aged and filtered rums like Plantation 3 Stars or Banks 5 Island.

Beyond flavor, there are also issues of strength. Wray & Nephew overproof looks like Bacardi Superior when

the two are side by side. However, the Wray & Nephew overproof is an unaged 63 percent ABV funk bomb, while the 40 percent ABV Bacardi Superior is assuredly not.

The “gold” category is particularly misleading. A common misconception states that the darker the rum, the longer it's been aged. In truth, it's frequently the opposite. The amount of color caused by aging is highly dependent on many things, including:

- The age of the cask: The more times a cask is used, the more “neutral” it becomes, and the less color and flavor it imparts.
- Cask char level: Some casks are lightly toasted, others are heavily charred. The latter imparts more coloring.
- Where the aging occurred: Tropically aged rums typically acquire more color from the cask than do continentally aged rums, all other factors being equal.

Plenty of extraordinary rums, aged fifteen years or more, exhibit a straw color that's far lighter than a three-year Bacardi Anejo; this is especially true for continentally aged rums. Even more surprising, a rum's color may be partially or entirely the result of caramel coloring. There are even rums labeled as “gold” rums which are completely unaged – all the coloring comes from spirit caramel.

Then there's “dark” or “black” rum. Well-known examples include Gosling's Black Seal, Myers's, Coruba, and Hamilton Jamaican Black. At their inexpensive price points, these rums surely didn't spend decades in the barrel. Almost all of a dark rum's color comes from spirit caramel. A dark rum float on a cocktail may look appealing to some, but once you know it's just young, heavily colored rum, the appeal often vanishes.

Finally, some people associate a darkly colored rum with spiced rum. Captain Morgan and Kraken (both

spiced rums) may have the same color as Coruba (a non-spiced Jamaican rum), but that doesn't mean they taste anything alike.

To sum this up, color is a terrible way to categorize a rum. Unfortunately, many brands who should know better persist in naming their expressions silver, white, gold, and dark. *Caveat emptor*.

BY COUNTRY

Cocktail recipes frequently specify a rum ingredient by country of origin – for example, one ounce of Jamaican rum.

While most Jamaican rums are quite different than, say, a Barbados rum or a Martinique rum, the flaw in specifying “Jamaican” is that it assumes all Jamaican rums are similar. Most large rum producers craft a broad range of products, from unaged or lightly aged spirit to premium, long-aged rum. Also, within the same country, different distilleries have very different house styles.

Among rum aficionados, certain countries are inextricably linked to a particular flavor profile: Jamaican rums should be funky and redolent of overripe banana. Guyanese rums should be earthy with hints of burnt sugar. Rums from Cuba and Puerto Rico should be lighter (because they're column distilled) and have a more wood-influenced, less fruity flavor. And we expect rum from Martinique and Guadeloupe to have the unique, vegetal notes associated with fresh-pressed cane.

However, Appleton Signature Blend from Jamaica has a very different flavor profile than equivalently aged rums from neighboring Hampden Estate or Worthy Park. People looking for high levels of Jamaican funk in their Montego Bay likely won't find it with Appleton Rare Blend. Likewise, all Guyanese rums come from the

same distillery. However, compare the flavor of Lemon Hart 1804 rum to El Dorado 12 Year rum, and you'll find they're remarkably different. One is young and heavily colored; the other is much older and heavily sweetened.

If you're making a cocktail and you care about what it tastes like, these factors make a big difference, so specifying a Barbados, Jamaican, or Cuban rum in a recipe without additional context, like age or ABV, is just crazy.

Equally unfortunate, imagine a recipe calling for American rum. Hundreds of distilleries across the U.S. make rum in all manner of styles – some from molasses, others from sugar or cane syrup. A few distilleries make cane juice rums. The diversity is great, but we're a long way from a cohesive American-style rum, thus illustrating the folly of calling for a rum's country of origin in a recipe.

BY COLONIAL HISTORY

A few years ago, it became popular to categorize Caribbean rums based on their colonial history. The European powers, including England, Spain, Portugal, and France, colonized the Americas and the Caribbean, and the history of these colonies and their ruling countries had a dramatic impact on how they each made rum, which in turn changed how it tastes.

From the inception of Caribbean rum around 1650 in Barbados, all the colonies made rum in a fairly similar way – on small plantations, each with its own small distillery. The source material was molasses, sometimes augmented with cane juice, and all the rums were distilled in pot stills. Rum production remained like this for roughly two hundred years.

In the early 1800s came the first continuous distillation; column stills gained rapid adoption, but it took several

decades before its use appeared in the colonies in any meaningful way. The use of column distillation is one of the hallmarks that separate rums in the colonial classification.

SPANISH STYLE

During the very early years of Caribbean rum, the Spanish crown forbade its colonies from making any distilled spirits. It wasn't until 1796 that Spanish colonies such as Cuba were allowed to produce rum. Thus, it took a good part of the 1800s for rum production to really take hold on the island. Even Bacardi, now the world's largest rum company, wasn't founded until 1862. Facundo Bacardi began using a charcoal filtering process to make his rum lighter and less harsh. This practice became a hallmark of rums made in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and other former Spanish colonies. By the late 1800s, Bacardi and others like the Arechabala family, founders of the original Havana Club rum, had started moving from pot stills to column distillation. These two factors – column distillation and charcoal filtration during aging – created a signature style of rum, here dubbed “Spanish style.”

Fast forward to the 1950s and 1960s. Light rums were the craze, and brands chased the vodka market: A common marketing pitch was that these rums were so light that they couldn't be smelled on the breath. Many producers, including Bacardi, went to massive, multi-column stills better suited to making very light rums. Their flavor is driven more from cask aging, rather than high levels of esters and other compounds found in French and some British style rums.

FRENCH STYLE

The French style of rum came about for several reasons, but foremost is that in the early 1800s, Napoleon set forth an aggressive program to make sugar beets the

primary source of sugar in France and wean the country off Caribbean sugar. This, combined with increased cane sugar production from other countries, prevented Martinique plantation owners from profitably selling their sugar. As a result, some plantations turned to making rum directly from sugar cane juice. The extra sucrose in the mash yields more alcohol per ton of cane crushed.

The French were also heavily investing in their colonies (Martinique and Guadeloupe) during the mid-1800s, so column stills arrived on these islands relatively early. The original stills, modeled after Armagnac stills, required some tweaking to successfully adapt to cane juice distillation. The resulting single-column design is referred to as a Creole column still. These stills, in combination with using cane juice rather than molasses, create the signature *rum agricole* flavor notes.

BRITISH STYLE

British colonies like Barbados and Jamaica reached rum-making success earlier than the French and Spanish colonies. With that success, especially in Jamaica's case, there was little pressure to change things. Traditional pot-still distillation on plantations was the usual mode of operation. Barbados did not acquire its first column still until 1893, and it's believed that Jamaica did not get its first column still until sometime around 1960. British Guiana (now Guyana) had column distillation earlier in the 1800s, but those rums were considered low value and dubbed “silent spirit” by its detractors.

Quantifying what makes a British style rum is challenging. Pot distillation is often cited as a key factor; you rarely find it in Spanish style or French style Caribbean rums. However, even the British colonies eventually acquired columns. The British colonies also stuck with molasses, rather than cane juice. (A slight

generalization.) Thus, modern British-style rum could be described as a blend of pot and column distillates deriving from molasses. However, there are great examples of entirely pot-stilled British style rums to be found.

If you're well acquainted with rum history, the colonial categorizations can serve as a useful shorthand to reference common varieties of rum made in the past. However, these categorizations are quite nebulous when viewed through a modern lens. A new distillery on Martinique now makes cane juice rum in a batch still. Venezuela's Diplomatico runs batch stills, and their rums are blends of both batch and column distillates, so you can't really call them Spanish style. And Jamaica's Clarendon and Guyana's Demerara Distillers Ltd. both have very modern, multi-column stills that can make very light rums not usually associated with their British heritage. All are counter-examples of the characteristics associated colonial rum styles. For this reason, many experts are downplaying its usefulness.

SIPPING / MIXING

It's natural to mentally divide rums into "those you'd mix with" and "those you'd sip neat" – usually directly related to the bottle's cost. The thinking is that mixing rums are inexpensive enough to use in cocktails, while sipping rums aren't. The first flaw in this theory is that for one person, a \$40 bottle of Appleton Rare Blend (twelve years) may be their top-shelf shipper, while for someone else it's the house rum for Mai Tais and Jet Pilots. So, is it a sipping or a mixing rum? It depends!

Plenty of rums are inexpensive enough for nearly everyone to use with abandon but are still quite enjoyable when consumed neat. Rums like Denizen Merchant's Reserve, Plantation Xaymaca, and any of the unaged "blanc" agricole rhums are wonderful in a

snifter. If a rum is good enough to go in your cocktail, it should be good enough to sip on its own.

Long-aged rums are lovely, but they inevitably focus on one quadrant of rum. As an enthusiast's palate expands, many come to appreciate younger rums, perhaps those with only three or four years of aging. Those who spend lots of money on a bottle often gravitate toward drier, less sweet rums; the irony is that many "mixing rums" have less sugar than their higher-priced brand siblings.

In short, categorizing rums as sipping or mixing is a slippery slope with no real upside.

NAVY RUM / NAVY STRENGTH

Certain rums are labeled as "navy" or "navy strength" rum. What exactly does this mean?

By the mid-1700s, rum had become firmly established on British Royal Navy ships as a daily ration issued to sailors. As navy ships traveled from port to port, they restocked their holds with locally made rums from various islands, including Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad, and Guyana. In the early days, each naval ship had its own unique set of rums, sourced from its most recent port visits. Eventually, someone thought to consistently supply rum to all British navy ships, not just those patrolling Caribbean waters. The British admiralty began purchasing large lots of West Indian and East Indian rums and blending them at the Deptford Victualling Yard in London, as well as in a few other ports.

The daily rum ration was suspended on July 31, 1970, dubbed Black Tot Day. Two important modern rums emerged from that decision: The first is known as the Black Tot Last Consignment, blended from demijohns of rum that remained in the navy's stores after Black Tot Day. It costs about \$1,000 a bottle, so makes for a rather expensive Navy Grog.

The other rum that emerged is Pusser's. In 1979, in exchange for ongoing donations to the Royal Navy's Sailor's Fund, a gentleman named Charles Tobias purchased the rights and blending information, i.e. "the recipe," to make a modern replica of the navy rum. Pusser's offers several expressions at different strengths, and their rum blend has changed several times over the years. As such, it's unclear how close Pusser's Rum is to the actual recipe they purchased.

Rum experts usually agree that navy rum is a blend of aged rums from two or more of the following colonies: Barbados, Jamaica, Guyana, and Trinidad. Some add that it should include rum from the Port Mourant double retort wooden pot still in Guyana, known for its earthy flavor profile. However, back in the 1940s and 1950s, brands like Lamb's and Caroni advertised "navy rums" from just Guyana or just Trinidad, respectively.

Completely orthogonal to navy rum is the term navy strength. One oft-told story is that back in the day, rum in a ship's hold might inadvertently mix with gunpowder, potentially rendering the gunpowder unusable. However, if the rum was high enough in alcohol, the gunpowder would still ignite. Thus, the navy required rums to be a minimum percentage of alcohol. In the British system, 57.15 percent ABV is considered "at proof." However, navy strength (established by the admiralty in 1866) is slightly less – 54.5 percent ABV. The notion of "under proof" or "over proof" is relative to the 57 percent ABV value. That said, 57.15 percent certainly qualifies. Also, "navy strength" is not limited to rum; there are plenty of navy strength gins, and in fact, any spirit at 54.5 or 57 percent ABV could reasonably be dubbed navy strength.

OVERPROOF

The use of "overproof" rum in a recipe is a travesty. Over what proof? For the sake of argument, let's assume 40 percent ABV is the baseline. Is any rum



Black Tot Last Consignment



Pusser's Rum

over 40 percent ABV an overproof? What about Smith & Cross, at 57 percent ABV? It seems like it might be overproof, but then what about the big guns like Lemon Hart 151, at 75.5 percent ABV? Where do we draw the line?

If you dig around in historical archives, you'll learn that rum at 57.15 percent ABV was considered "at proof," rums with a lower ABV were stated as "X degrees under proof," and those over were "X degrees over proof." By this definition, you could make the case that an overproof rum is higher than 57 percent ABV.

However, an example proves the folly of categorizing a rum as overproof: Consider a typical unaged Jamaican rum like Rum Fire, at 63 percent ABV. It's clearly above navy strength. Now consider Lemon Hart 151 and El Dorado 151: Each at 75.5 percent ABV, they're obviously overproof. While all three could be labeled as such, they all taste completely different. If a recipe called for an ounce of overproof rum, which should you use? It's not clear at all! That's why in the context of a recipe, overproof isn't a useful rum categorization.

SPICED

It's easy to understand what a spiced rum is: rum infused with a mixture of spices. However, other than understanding that each brand uses some portfolio of spices, it's wide open what recipe each producer may have used. At least with gin you can assume juniper is part of the mix.

Many spiced rums like Captain Morgan are heavily sweetened and laden with vanilla. Others, like Foursquare's spiced rum, are quite dry with little or no vanilla. And both taste very different than Chairman's Reserved spiced rum. The point is, spiced rums can be quite compelling but are not easily interchangeable in recipes. This may be one reason you rarely see a spiced rum specified in tiki recipes without designating which



Plantation O.F.T.D. Overproof

brand. In most tiki recipes, the specific spice flavors are introduced by means other than a spiced rum.

GARGANO CATEGORIZATION

Luca Gargano, of Italian rum company Velier, and Foursquare master distiller Richard Seale have recently promoted a classification system now commonly known as the Gargano categorization. It has four categories, although their names have evolved over time. Currently, they are:

SINGLE RUM

Distilled in a batch still, an artisanal process which best expresses the raw material and the know-how of the distiller.

SINGLE BLENDED RUM

A blend of rums distilled in traditional column and batch stills.

TRADITIONAL RUM

Distilled in traditional single or double column stills.

RUM

Distilled with modern multi-column distillation systems.

For cane juice rums, there are two additional categories: Single agricole rhum (batch distilled) and agricole rhum (traditional column distilled).

The Gargano categorization focuses on three objective aspects of rum production: source material, distillation style, and blending. It does not cover fermentation (longer fermentation typically creates more flavors) or aging (neither duration nor type of cask is considered).

The Gargano classification says nothing about the rum's flavor. It is merely a way of grouping rums made in a similar manner, e.g. molasses-based batch distillation. In focusing on production characteristics, it highlights the difference between traditional rum distilleries and modern mega-factories with massive, multi-column stills.

Rum makers using traditional methods, including Appleton and Foursquare, compete for the same price-sensitive shelf space alongside huge producers using more industrial means, like multi-column distillation. In the Gargano categorization, mass-produced rums like Bacardi are labeled as intrinsically different products than a Foursquare or Appleton product. In an ideal world, pricing would reflect the higher production costs of rum in the single and single-blended categories. By creating well-defined categories that are not subject

to interpretation, the Gargano classification aims to educate consumers about different grades of rum. This is similar to consumers placing more value on a single-malt Scotch than on a blended grain whisky, for example.

In this regard, Gargano succeeds. However, as a way of specifying what type of rum to use in a tiki recipe, it falls short. A recipe calling for single blended rum could use rums from Venezuela, Cuba, Barbados, or Jamaica. Each has a very distinct flavor profile and could substantially change how the resulting drink tastes. In fairness, the proponents of the Gargano categorization make no claim that it's ideal for use in a recipe context, but that doesn't stop some enthusiasts from trying.

CATE CATEGORIZATION

In their James Beard Award-winning book, *Smuggler's Cove: Exotic Cocktails, Rum, and the Cult of Tiki*, Martin and Rebecca Cate lay out a very detailed classification system. It targets a few dimensions of rum production – source material, distillation process, and aging – to create a bevy of categories. The twenty-one Cate categories can be grouped like this:

- Pot Still (Unaged, Lightly Aged, Aged, Long Aged)
- Blended (Lightly Aged, Aged, Long Aged)
- Column Still (Lightly Aged, Aged, Long Aged)
- Black (Pot Still, Blended, Blended Overproof)
- Cane (Coffey Still Aged, Pot Still Unaged, Pot Still Aged)
- Cane AOC Martinique Rhum Agricole (Blanc, Vieux, Long Aged)
- Pot Still Cachaça (Unaged, Aged)

The Cate categorization is essentially a superset of Gargano, with the added dimension of aging – lightly aged, aged, and long aged. It retains the batch-versus-



column distinction but collapses “traditional column still” and “modern multi-column still” into a single column still dimension. It also separates Martinique AOC rhums from non-AOC rhums.

Attempting to categorize different aging techniques and styles into even twenty-one buckets is a slippery slope. Rather than throwing up their hands, the Cate categorization takes a blunt but sensible approach, dispatching with a fixed number of aging years in favor of unaged, lightly aged, aged, and long-aged buckets.

Yet even with twenty-one categories, rums can vary widely in flavor profile. Appleton Signature Blend tastes quite different from the Plantation 3 Stars, while Banks 5 Island is nothing like Cartavio Selecto. Yet all are in the blended, lightly aged category. The production variables not included in the categorization, such as fermentation style, aging techniques, and additives, make for very different rums within the same Cate categorization.

Be that as it may, some bars including the Cates’ own Smuggler’s Cove have used this categorization in their recipe specifications. Thus, instead of saying “1 oz Mount Gay Eclipse rum,” it might say “1 oz lightly blended aged rum.” While this gives the bartender more latitude in the rums they can choose for a recipe, bartenders will need to know the Cate categorization of the rums at their disposal.

MINIMALIST TIKI CATEGORIZATION

It should now be clear that classifying rums in a way that’s generally useful in all cases is a thankless job and fraught with peril. Nonetheless, let’s take a stab at it and define our Minimalist Tiki rum styles. We briefly looked at these in Part One. However, with the benefit

of newly expanded rum knowledge, they’re replicated below with additional production notes.

Keep in mind that unlike groupings like Gargano’s, the Minimalist Tiki styles aren’t intended to encompass all rums. Rather, these styles describe a particular set of rums frequently used in tiki recipes. Also, the ABV of all these rums is around 40 percent, unless otherwise noted. Note that some popular rums like Smith & Cross, Plantation Stiggins’ Fancy Pineapple Rum, and Plantation O.F.T.D. Overproof don’t fit neatly into any of these categories.

Finally, it’s important to understand that the Aged Jamaican and Aged Demerara categories are essentially subsets of the Moderately Aged category. In this scheme, all aged Jamaican rums could be considered Moderately Aged rums, but not all Moderately Aged rums could be considered Aged Jamaican rums. Ditto for Demerara rums.



MINIMALIST TIKI CATEGORIZATION

Lightly Aged / Filtered Rum: Molasses rums that have aged for a few years (typically three or fewer), then charcoal filtered, rendering them clear or very lightly colored.

- In the color categorization scheme, these would be “silver” rums.
- In the colonial categorization scheme, these rums would be British or Spanish style. You won’t find much in the way of French style rums here.

Moderately Aged Rum: Molasses rums that have aged between three and eight years (ballpark). They have not undergone charcoal filtration, but they may have spirit caramel added to make them appear darker.

- In the color categorization scheme, these would be gold rums or possibly dark rums.
- In the colonial categorization scheme, these rums would be British or Spanish style.

Aged Jamaican Rum (“Dark Jamaican Rum”): These rums are called out separately from Moderately Aged Rum because of their pronounced notes of overripe banana and funk not found in other aged rums. Note that “dark Jamaican rum” is just aged Jamaican rum with a high amount of spirit caramel.

- In the colonial categorization scheme, these rums would be British style, made in Jamaica, with some or all pot distillate.

Unaged Jamaican Overproof Rum: Unaged, molasses-based rums at 63 percent ABV. Rarely found in classic tiki recipes but gaining favor in recent years to add a bit of Jamaican hogo alongside other rums in a recipe.

- In the colonial categorization scheme, these rums would be British style, made in Jamaica, with some or all pot distillate.

Aged Demerara Rum: These rums are called out separately from Moderately Aged Rum because of their pronounced, earthy, burnt sugar notes not found in other aged rums. The Demerara name refers to an agricultural region in Guyana. In the distant past, rums from this region were referred to as Demerara rum, rather than Guyana rum, and the name stuck. Note that Demerara rums often have high amounts of spirit caramel, making them darker than they would normally appear.

- In the colonial categorization scheme, these rums would be British style, made in Guyana, with some or all pot distillate.

Overproof Demerara Rum: Aged Demerara rums at 75.5 percent ABV (151 proof). This is called out as a separate category because it’s cited frequently in tiki recipes, i.e., Lemon Hart 151.

- In the colonial categorization scheme, these rums would be British style, made in Guyana, with some or all pot distillate.

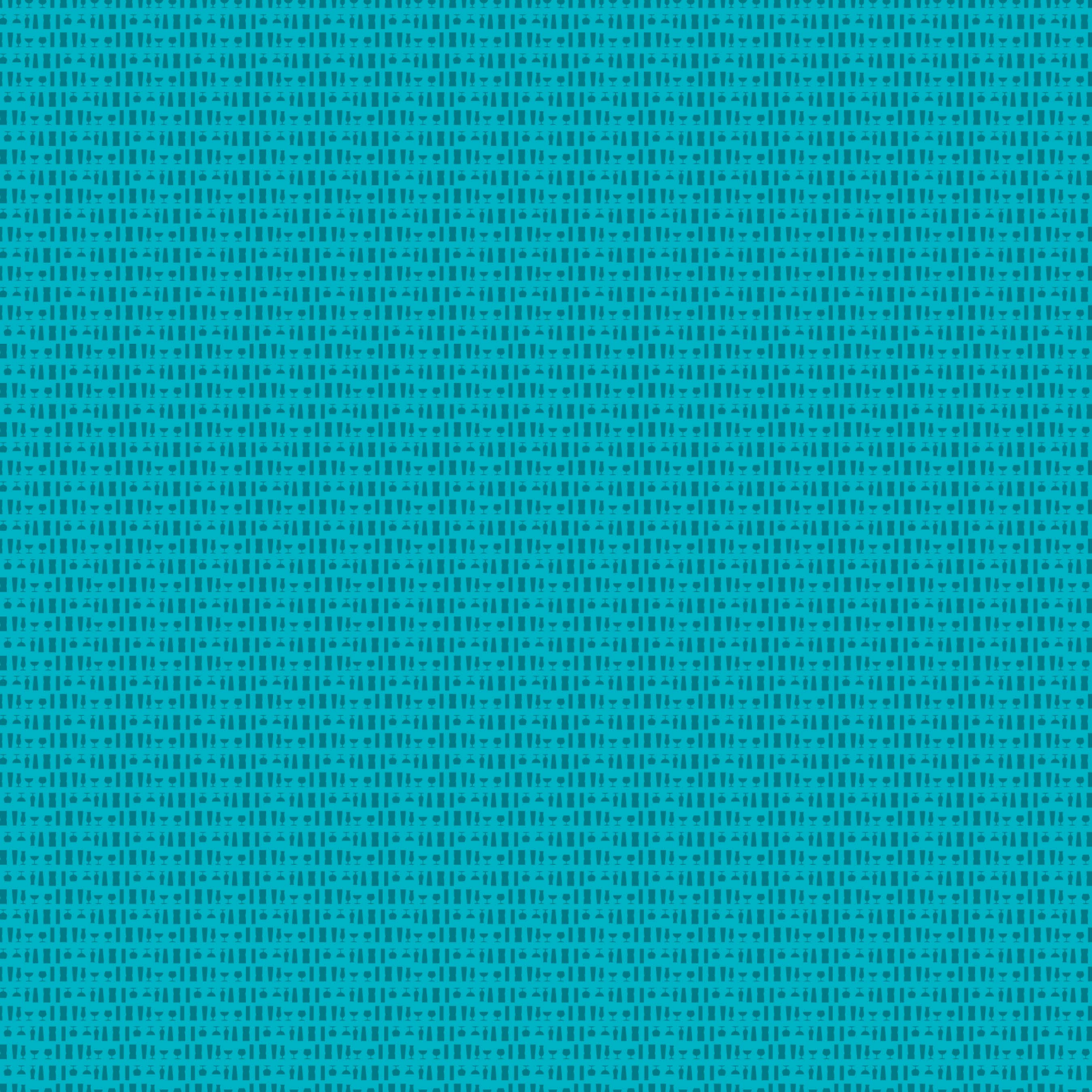
Aged Agricole Rum: Cane juice rums from Martinique or Guadeloupe, aged for four years or fewer. May be labeled as VO, VSOP, or *élevé sous bois*.

- In the colonial categorization scheme, these rums would be French style.

Of these categories, the ones you’ll likely use most frequently are:

- Lightly Aged/Filtered Rum
- Aged Jamaican Rum
- Aged Demerara Rum

If you only have room for three bottles on your tiki bar shelf, one of each category will take you far.





PART FOUR
**Movers &
(Cocktail) Shakers**



Tiki fire at The Inferno Room, Indianapolis

Fifteen

The New Tiki Vanguard

While classic tiki recipes are still revered a half century (or more) since they appeared, the tiki community isn't stuck in the past. Enthusiasts and bartenders around the world are constantly creating new recipes that go well beyond the Minimalist Tiki ethos.

Unlike tiki's golden era, when recipes were closely guarded trade secrets, modern era practitioners take to social media, trading recipes, notes, and tips. Some bars even pay tribute to their fellow tiki-heads by featuring their recipes (credited of course) on their menus.

Here are a handful of the bartenders on today's cutting edge of tiki — those who are consistently innovating and sharing new recipes with the global tiki community. They've all graciously shared the recipes that appear here. Pull up a seat to their bar and watch them do their magic.

Note: All recipes in this portion of the book follow a consistent formatting scheme, from bitters to spirits, as described in Part One. Where a recipe calls for a specific rum or liqueur, a more general description is provided, unless there is not a good substitute. For example, a recipe calling for El Dorado 5 says: aged Demerara rum (El Dorado 5).

Also, many professionals rely on a spindle blender as essential equipment, especially in a high-volume bar. In those recipes, we have also added shaking instructions, for those who don't have a spindle blender handy.



Brian Maxwell

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA & PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

Bartender and shaker of spirits, Brian Maxwell is a consultant, historian, and the creator of shakerofspirits.com, an educational website and consulting company focused on beverage history and its role in today's hospitality industry. Brian has worked on creating beverage programs and educational seminars across the United States, from New York to New Orleans. First embracing rum as a category during a trip to Appleton Estate many years ago, Brian fell in love with tropical escapism and never looked back. His approach to tropical cocktails is full of theatrics and whimsy. He currently conjures tiki magic and rum history behind bars in both New Orleans and Pittsburgh.

Ship Has Come In

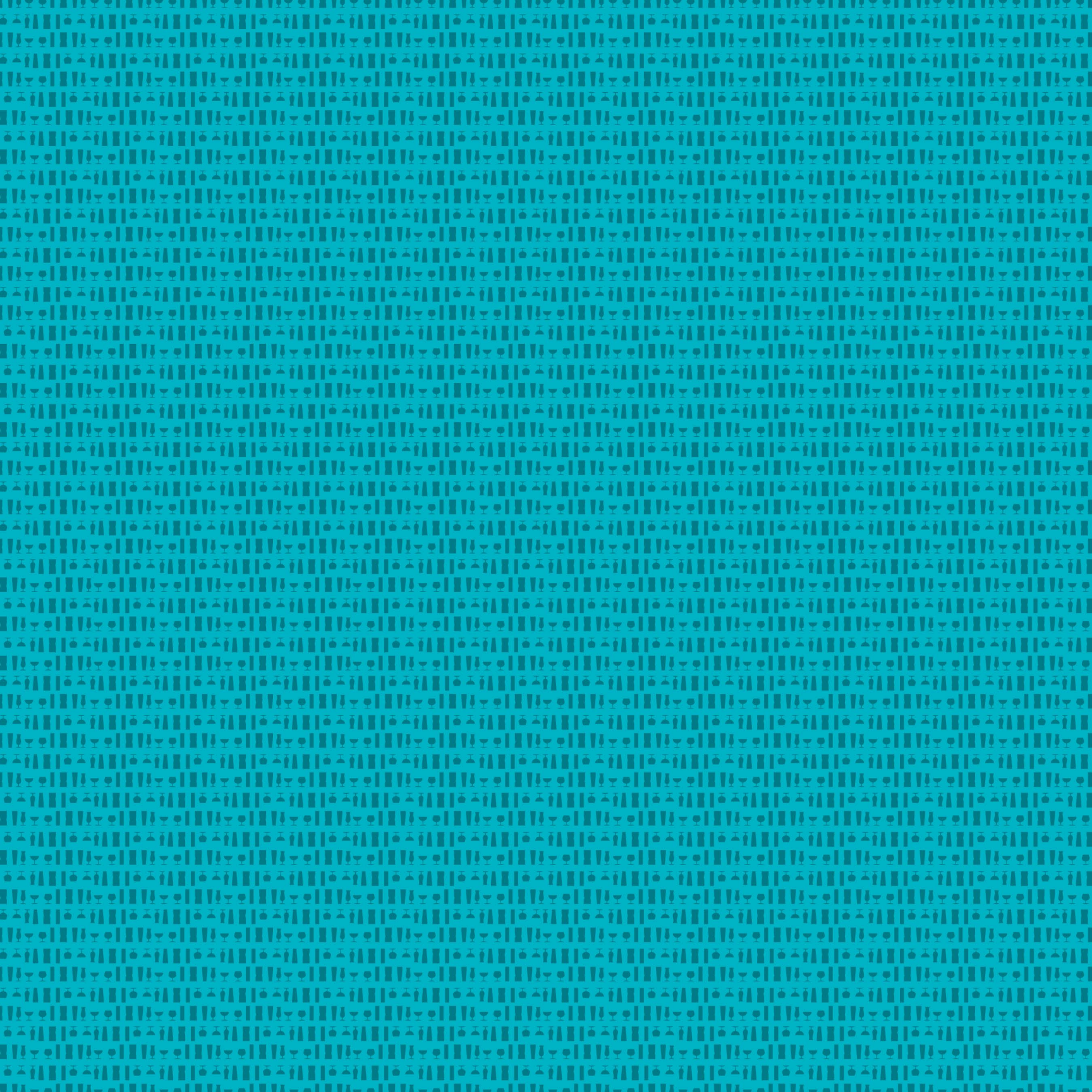
Brian Maxwell

- 0.75 oz lime juice
- 0.5 oz orange Juice
- 0.5 oz Giffard Apricot Liqueur
- 0.5 oz China China Amer
- 0.5 oz blue curaçao
- 0.75 oz aged Demerara rum
(El Dorado 12 year)
- 0.75 oz aged Jamaican rum
(Worthy Park Single
Estate)

Build ingredients in shaker. Shake with ice, pour into tiki mug. Fill with fresh crushed ice.

Garnish with mint sprigs, an orange peel rosette, and anything else nautical.







Jason Alexander

TACOMA, WASHINGTON

Jason Alexander launched his barkeeping career in 2010 inside a coffee shop that he and his wife, Robyn, owned and operated in Tacoma. In many failed attempts to find his voice in the spirit world, it wasn't until he discovered proper Mai Tais, Navy Groggs, and Zombies on a trip to Hawaii that he found his true calling.

The coffee shop gave way to a nighttime bar business, where exotic drinks were prepared and consumed at an exponential rate. This led to the birth of Tacoma Cabana, Jason and Robyn's first bar, and a more appropriate setting to delve deeper into exotic drink making, rum collecting, and a full immersion into the tiki lifestyle.

Jason won Best Cocktails in Western Washington for five consecutive years while bringing home an Iron Tikitender title at Tiki-Kon in 2014. But that was only the beginning. Enter Devil's Reef...a dark nautical tiki concept masterminded by Jason and Robyn to further explore the depths and boundaries of tiki drinks, exotic cocktails, and rums.

Commando Grog

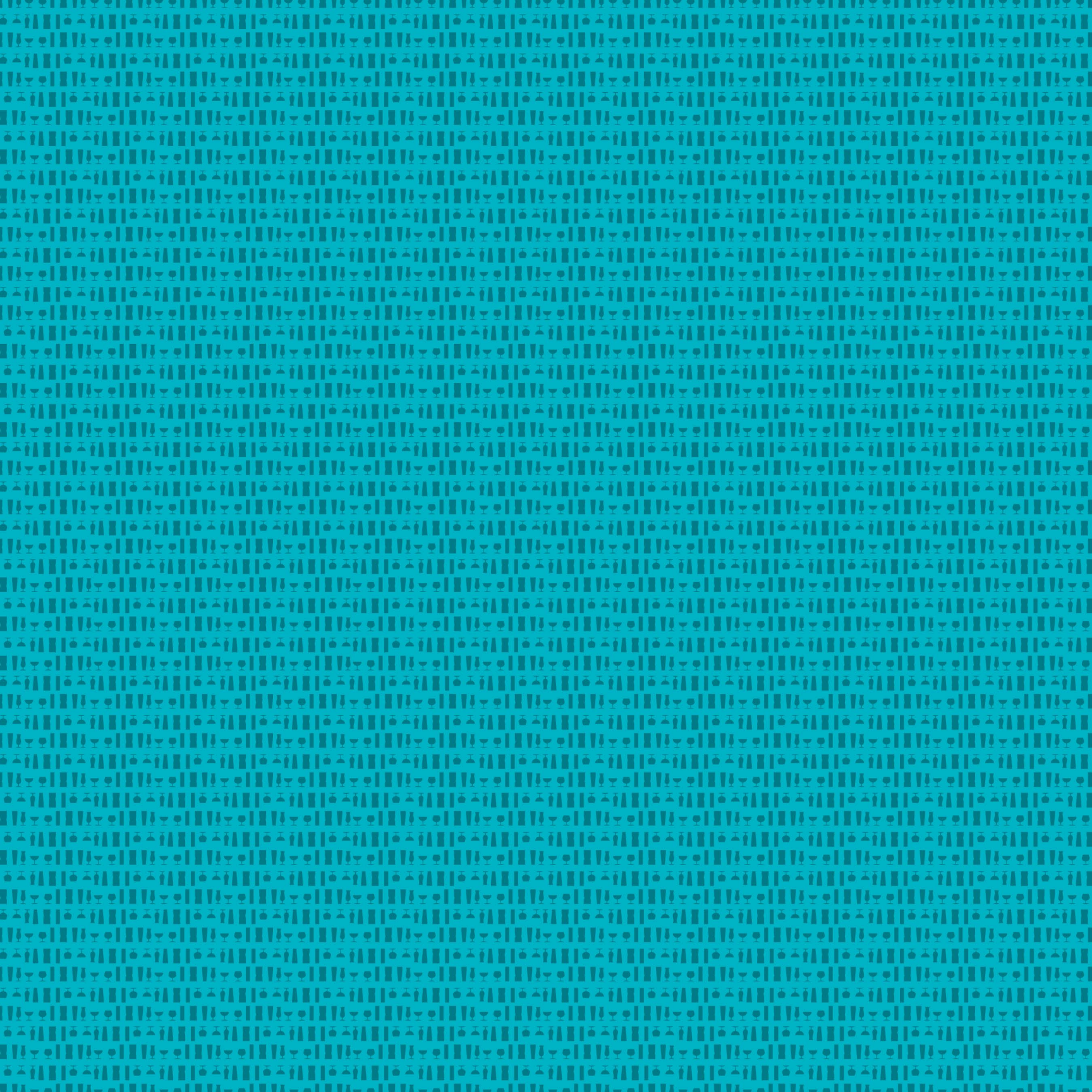
Jason Alexander

- 0.75 oz lime juice
- 1.5 oz grapefruit juice
- 0.5 oz orgeat syrup
- 0.5 oz cinnamon syrup
- 0.5 oz pimento dram
- 0.5 oz falernum
- 1.5 oz Plantation O.F.T.D.
Overproof
- 1.5 oz moderately aged rum
(Plantation Original
Dark)

Build ingredients in shaker.
Flash blend or shake with crushed
ice, pour into a large snifter. Fill
with fresh crushed ice.

Garnish with a mint sprig.







Marie King

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Marie King is head mixologist and executive bar manager at both Southern California Tonga Hut locations – Los Angeles’ oldest Tiki bar in North Hollywood and their second location in the heart of downtown Palm Springs. Prior to her work at Tonga Hut, she created and managed the cocktail program at the first new Don the Beachcomber to open in decades in Sunset Beach, California.

Marie got her start in tiki with her (soon to be) husband, who introduced her to Trader Vic’s Beverly Hills on their first Valentine’s Day together. Since then Marie has been chosen as one of “sixteen female bartenders you need to know in LA” by Thrillist and has earned the distinction of becoming a rum judge. She has presented seminars in cocktails and tiki culture at festivals in New Jersey, California, Spain, and Italy, and makes frequent guest bartender appearances at some of the top establishments in Los Angeles, as well as hosting the monthly Rum Rhum Club at the North Hollywood Tonga Hut. When not working on new libations, Marie can be found hunting for vintage and tiki treasures at swap meets, thrift stores, and estate sales and flexing her green thumbs in Venice, California.



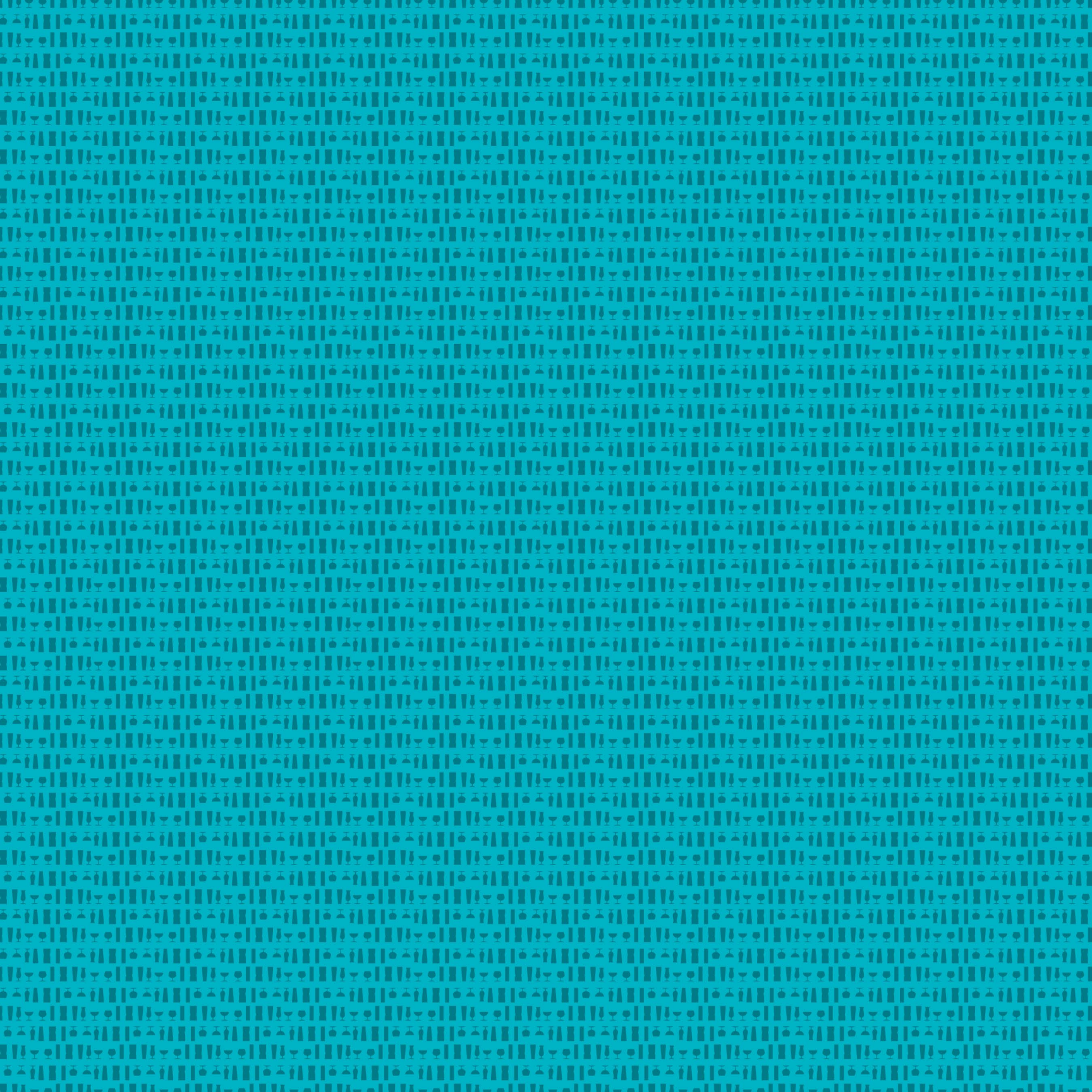
Lau Lana

Marie King

- 1 fresh strawberry, coarsely chopped
- 0.5 oz lime juice
- 0.5 oz simple syrup
- 0.5 oz pimento dram (Bitter Truth)
- 0.5 oz Campari
- 1.5 oz lightly aged/filtered rum (Don Q Cristal)

Measure all ingredients and coarsely chopped strawberry into blender, pulse blend to break down fruit. Add ice. Flash blend for two seconds, or fully blend for a slushy drink. Pour into tall collins or zombie glass.

Garnish with a whole fresh strawberry on side of glass.





Passion Grove Swizzle

COCKTAIL WONK ORIGINALS

Passion Grove Swizzle

Matt Pietrek

- 0.75 oz lemon juice
- 1 oz pineapple juice
- 0.5 oz passion fruit syrup
- 0.5 oz falernum
- 0.75 oz unaged Jamaican overproof rum (Rum-Bar)
- 1.25 oz lightly aged/filtered rum (Plantation 3 Stars)

Build ingredients in a tall cooler glass. Fill nearly full with fresh crushed ice. Swizzle vigorously with a swizzle stick or bar spoon. Top up with more crushed ice.

Garnish with a pineapple frond and an orchid.

The Reverend's Tai

Matt Pietrek

- 1 oz lime juice
- 0.5 oz orgeat syrup
- 0.25 oz orange liqueur (Pierre Ferrand Dry Curacao, Clément Créole Shrubbb)
- 0.5 oz Plantation O.F.T.D. Overproof
- 1.5 oz Plantation Stiggins' Fancy Pineapple Rum

Build ingredients in shaker. Shake with ice, strain into a double old-fashioned glass. Fill with fresh crushed ice.

Sink spent lime shell into drink. Garnish with pineapple fronds and an orchid.

Aztec Warrior

Brady Sprouse, as shared with Matt Pietrek

- 2 dashes Angostura bitters
- 0.75 oz lime juice
- 0.75 oz grapefruit juice
- 0.5 oz rich cinnamon syrup (2:1)
- 0.5 oz falernum
- 0.5 oz Batavia Arrack
- 1.5 oz Ancho Reyes Chile Liqueur
- 0.25 oz aged Jamaican overproof rum (Smith & Cross), to float

Build all ingredients in shaker. Shake with crushed ice, pour into a tiki mug. Fill with fresh crushed ice. Float with overproof rum.

Garnish with a grapefruit twist and a cinnamon stick.



BRAC

STOP
HERE
ON
RED

LOCAL

8156-54

Lost Lake

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

A stylish tropical oasis—meets—flotsam strewn island hut in Chicago's Logan Square neighborhood, Lost Lake evokes both the glamorous tropical escapism of 1930s Hollywood and the rugged, nautical island aesthetic of the world's first tiki bar, the original Don's Beachcomber Cafe. Under a roof of lauhala, between walls of iconic banana leaf-print wallpaper, Lost Lake's cocktail program pays homage to eighty-plus years of exotic cocktail history with a menu of original recipes and selections from the classic tiki canon. Decked out in tropical attire and well-versed in rum (and rhum, and ron), Lost Lake's talented team is ready to take you on a mini-vacation, by way of a wildly garnished tiki cocktail.

Created by Land and Sea Dept., Paul McGee, and Shelby Allison in 2015, Lost Lake is a four-time James Beard Foundation Outstanding Bar Program semifinalist (2016-2019), Tales of the Cocktail Spirited Awards' Best American Cocktail Bar (2018), *Time Out Chicago's* Bar of the Year (2018), one of *Esquire's* Best Bars in America (2017), and *Imbibe* magazine's Cocktail Bar of the Year (2015).

"Lost Lake"

Lost Lake

- 0.75 oz lime juice
- 0.5 oz pineapple juice
- 0.75 oz passion fruit syrup (BG Reynolds or Small Hand Foods)
- 0.25 oz Campari
- 0.25 oz maraschino liqueur (Luxardo)
- 2 oz aged Jamaican rum (Plantation Xamayca)

Build ingredients in shaker. Flash blend or shake with one cup crushed ice, pour into a collins glass. Fill with fresh crushed ice.

Garnish with a pineapple crescent and fronds, an orange floret, an orchid, and a swizzle stick.



Index

A

Absinthe

- in Dr. Funk E. Sanchez, 268
- in Escape to Molokai, 197
- in Hard Heart and a Spiny Corset, 201
- in Oh Captain, My Captain, 155
- in Pacific Theatre, 144
- in Pagan Breakfast, 248
- in Pining for the Fjords, 279
- in Plank Owner's Punch, 167
- in Salty in All the Right Places, 202
- in The Third Oath, 167
- in Three Dragons and a Dash, 279
- in Three Treasures, 175
- in White Zombie, 212

ABV. See Alcohol by volume

Acid-adjusted pineapple juice, 265

Agave nectar, 265

Agave syrup

- in Escape to Molokai, 197
- in Message in a Bottle, 236

Aged rum. See also Lightly aged/filtered rum; Moderately aged rum

- categorization of, 124-126
- color of, 112, 118
- history of, 120
- production of, 109-112
- recipes highlighting, 137

Agricole rum, 24

- in Agricole Scorpion, 278
- in Apricole Swizzle, 216
- in The Caribbean Goddess, 194
- in Catch a Fire, 224
- categorization of, 24, 127
- definition of, 98
- in Disco Banana, 175
- in Donga Daiquiri, 267
- in Doomsday Machine, 265
- in Dr. Funk E. Sanchez, 268
- in Escape to Molokai, 197
- in The Forgotten Headhunter, 197
- in Four Suns, 219
- frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 15, 16
- in Hard Heart and a Spiny Corset, 201
- in The Last Fang, 194

- vs. lightly aged/filtered rum, 21
- in Machete Drinks, 265
- in Mammoth Tusk, 152
- in The Martinique Lighthouse, 269
- in Message in a Bottle, 236
- recipes highlighting, 137
- recommended brands of, 136
- in Salty in All the Right Places, 202
- in Tongan Rhum Swizzle, 190
- in Tortuga, 207
- in Tropic of Cancer, 155
- in The Vacation, 159
- in Wiki Wiki, 185

Agricole Scorpion, 278

Aguardiente de Caña, 98

Akin, Jen, 252-253

Alamea, 161

Alcatraz Island, 175

Alcohol by volume (ABV), 5

Alexander, Jason, 50, 165-168

Alexander, Robyn, 165

Allison, Shelby, 198-202, 239

Allspice bitters, 186

Allspice dram. See Pimento dram

Amaro

- in The Bainbridge, 219
- in Feet First in the Deep End, 201
- in Peace Be the Journey, 148
- in Piña Colada Old Fashioned, 224

Ancho Reyes

- in Aztec Warrior, 88, 215
- in Señor Diablo, 269

Angostura bitters, 28

- in Angostura Colada, 211
- in Apricole Swizzle, 216
- in Aztec Warrior, 215
- in Bourbon Cocktail, 186
- in The Caribbean Goddess, 194
- in Day of the Dead, 257
- in The Death Star, 266
- in Escape to Molokai, 197
- in Esotico Rum Cup, 162
- in Feet First in the Deep End, 201
- in The Forgotten Headhunter, 197
- in Four Suns, 219
- frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 15, 16, 17, 28
- in Hard Heart and a Spiny Corset, 201
- in Hats Off to Berry, 228
- in Jamaican Spiced Swizzle #3, 194

- in Mr. Black & Gold, 273
- in Pilikia, 257
- in Piña Colada Old Fashioned, 224
- in Pining for the Fjords, 279
- in Porch Light, 276
- in Quarantine Order, 248
- in Rum River Mystic, 241
- in Tabu Tabu Grog, 190
- in Three Dragons and a Dash, 279
- in Tongan Rhum Swizzle, 190
- in Transatlantic Orbit, 180
- in Trididadi Issues, 152
- in The Vacation, 159
- in You're Not My Real Trinidad, 186

Angostura Colada, 211

Antakarian Fire Dancer, 232

Antiguan rum, 133

Aperol, 253

App, Beachbum Berry Total Tiki, 12, 13, 263

Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée, 115

Apple brandy, 276

Apple juice, 261

Applejack, 175

Appleton Estate rum, 22, 119, 124

Apricole Swizzle, 216

Apricot brandy, 261

Apricot liqueur

- in Apricole Swizzle, 216
- in Ravagers Funeral, 152
- in Ship Has Come In, 149
- in Sundress Weather, 270
- in Transatlantic Orbit, 180

Apte-Elford, Anu, 209, 243

Aquavit

- in Pining for the Fjords, 279
- in Sundress Weather, 270
- in Tropical Twilight Gloom, 202

Arechabala family, 120

Arkham Kula, 168

Aromatic bitters

- in Davy Jones, 206
- in Doomsayer's Grog, 168
- in Mammoth Tusk, 152
- in Overseas Telegram, 211
- in Plank Owner's Punch, 167
- in Port of Innsmouth, 168
- in The Return of the Malachai, 147
- in South Seas Sleepwalker, 171
- in The Third Oath, 167

Augustin, Sly, 259
Austin, Chad, 151-155
 career of, 151
 recipes by, 152-155, 270, 275, 276, 279
Aztec Warrior, 88, 215

B

Bacardi, 118, 120, 124
Bahía de Montego, 273
Baijiu, 265
The Bainbridge, 219
Bald Bastard Swizzle, 197
Bali Bali
 matrix of ingredients in, 14-15
 modern take on, 265
Bali Hai Bastard, 190
Bamboo knot skewers, 46
Banana, 175
Banana bread syrup, 232
Banana Life, 159
The Banana Life Redux, 216
Banana liqueur, 60
 in Banana Life, 159
 in The Banana Life Redux, 216
 in Basic Beach, 260
 in Commando Life, 171
 in C.R.E.A.M., 252
 in Disco Banana, 175
 in Feet First in the Deep End, 201
 in Overseas Telegram, 211
 in Peace Be the Journey, 148
 in There's Always Money in the Banana Stand, 212
 in Waikiki at Dusk Forever, 201
Banana syrup
 in Bahía de Montego, 273
 in Machete Drinks, 265
 salted, 265
Banks 5 Island rum, 21
Bar(s), tiki, 221-261, 282. See also specific bars
The Bar Book (Morgenthaler), 5
Barbadian rum, 115, 119, 120, 133
Barcelona Rum Club, 193
Bartenders, 141-212. See also specific people
Basic Beach, 260
Basil, 257
Bastardo Saffrin (blog), 193

Bastard's Mix No. 2, 194
Batavia Arrack, 60
 in Aztec Warrior, 88, 215
 in Hard Heart and a Spiny Corset, 201
 in Transatlantic Orbit, 180
Batch (pot) distillation
 history of, 119-121
 process of, 106-108
Beach, Donn, 8, 9, 16, 29, 86
Beachbum Berry Total Tiki app, 12, 13, 263
Beachbum Berry's Sippin' Safari (Berry), 5
Beary, Kevin, 183-186
Beer, 211
Belizean rum, 133
Benedictine, 241
Bergamot liqueur, 278
Bergeron, Victor "Trader Vic," 93
Berry, Jeff
 app of, 12, 13, 263
 Beachbum Berry's Sippin' Safari, 5
 on passion fruit syrup, 33
 and Remsberg, 17
 research on historic rums by, 95
BG Reynolds, 29
Bird of Paradise, 159
Bitter Truth, 29, 60
Bitter Truth Golden Falernum, 86
Bitter Truth Jerry Thomas' Own Decanter
Bitters, 267
Bittermens Boston Bittahs, 232
Bittermens 'Elemakule Tiki Bitters
 in Bald Bastard Swizzle, 197
 in Copperhead's Fang, 267
 in 138 Swizzle, 265
 in Pineapple Paralysis, 275
Bitters, 28. See also specific types
 frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 15, 16
 types of, 28
Black cherry syrup, 194
Black Orchid, 179
Black Orchid spices, 179
Black rum, 118
Black tea honey, 175
Black Tot Last Consignment, 121
Black-blueberry syrup, 228
Blenders
 ice crushing in, 37
 spindle, 66-67, 141, 263
Blood orange juice, 265
Blueberry syrup, 269

Bogan, Eric, 265, 275
Bolo
 matrix of ingredients in, 14-15
 modern take on, 265
Bootlegger Tiki (Palm Springs bar), 151
Boston shakers, 39-41
Bourbon, 26-28
 in Bourbon Cocktail, 186
 in By the Toe, 269
 in Feet First in the Deep End, 201
 frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 15, 16
 in I Should Coco, 212
 in Pilikia, 257
 in Pineapple Paralysis, 275
Bourbon Cocktail, 186
Bowls, punch, 91
Branca Menta, 147
Brands, rum
 overview of, 129-134
 recommendations on, 135-136
Brandy, 26
 in Cotton Mouth Killer, 261
 in Devil You Know, 186
 frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 15, 16
 in Porch Light, 276
 in Sundress Weather, 270
Brandy sniffers, 64-65
British style rum, 120-121
Bual madeira
 in Antakarian Fire Dancer, 232
 in Bourbon Cocktail, 186
Bulk rum, 129-130
Bush Pilot, 270
Butterfly pea tea, 186
By the Toe, 269

C

Cachaça, 98
 in Bird of Paradise, 159
 in Polynesian Spell II, 185
 in Three Treasures, 175
Calamansi syrup
 in The Martinique Lighthouse, 269
 recipe for, 269
Campari, 60
 in Hard Heart and a Spiny Corset, 201
 in Jungle Doctor, 216
 in Lau Lana, 191

- in Lost Lake, 240
- in Slippah Sippah, 276
- in Tropic of Cancer, 155
- Cane juice rum
 - categorization of, 124
 - in On a Coconut Island, 267
 - production of, 98-100
 - in Slippah Sippah, 276
 - in Sonando, 275
- CANE Rhum Bar (Charleston), 223-224
- Cane spirits, 97-98. See also Rum
- Captain Morgan, 118-119, 123
- Caramel, spirit, 113, 118
- Caribbean Club (Barcelona bar), 193
- The Caribbean Goddess, 194
- Caribbean Zombie, 280
- Casa Magdalena rum, 201
- Cask aging. See Aged rum
- Cask strength rum, 113
- Catch a Fire, 224
- Cate, Martin, 5, 66, 88, 124-126
- Cate, Rebecca, 5, 124-126
- Categories, rum. See Rum categorizations
- CBD oil, 268
- Centripetal juicers, 68
- Chairman's Reserved spiced rum, 123
- Chambord, 257
- Chartreuse, 60
 - in Espirítu de Caracas, 228
 - in HMS Glasgow Grog, 145
 - in Jade Idol, 179
 - in Mammoth Tusk, 152
 - in There's Always Money in the Banana Stand, 212
- Cherry Blossom, 180
- Cherry garnishes, 46
- Cherry heering, 60
- Cherry syrup, 194
- Chief Lapu Lapu
 - matrix of ingredients in, 14-15
 - modern take on, 266
- Chili, 88
- China China Amer, 149
- Chocolate liqueur, 148
- Cinnamon
 - in fire garnishes, 74
 - smoking sticks of, 76
- Cinnamon syrup, 33-35
 - in Aztec Warrior, 215
 - in Bald Bastard Swizzle, 197
- in Bourbon Cocktail, 186
- in Bush Pilot, 270
- in Caribbean Zombie, 280
- in Cherry Blossom, 180
- in Commando Grog, 166
- in Disco Banana, 175
- in Donga Daiquiri, 267
- in Doomsday Machine, 265
- in Espirítu de Caracas, 228
- in Four Suns, 219
- frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 14, 16
- hibiscus-infused, 265
- in Oh Captain, My Captain, 155
- in Pineapple Paralysis, 275
- in Port of Innsmouth, 168
- in Quarantine Order, 248
- recipe for, 33-35, 80
- in Second Runner Up, 148
- in Shores of Indaal, 219
- in There's Always Money in the Banana Stand, 212
- in The Third Oath, 167
- in Tongan Rhum Swizzle, 190
- in Tortuga, 207
- in Transatlantic Orbit, 180
- in Trididadi Issues, 152
- in Waikiki at Dusk Forever, 201
- Citrus, storage of, 35, 36
- Citrus juices, 35-36. See also specific juices
 - equipment for preparing, 35, 39, 68
 - frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 14, 16
- Citrus knives, 38-39
- Citrus wheels, dried, 75-76
- Clairin, 98
- Classic tiki drinks. See also Minimalist Tiki
- Classic Thirty
 - criteria for, 11-12
 - modern takes on, 263-280
 - new recipes within pattern of, 87-88
 - origins of, 4
- Clove garnishes, 76
- Cobbler shakers, 39-41
- Cobra's Fang
 - matrix of ingredients in, 14-15
 - modern take on, 267, 268
- Cocchi Americano, 201
- Coco Réal, 35
- Cocoanut Grove
 - matrix of ingredients in, 14-15
 - modern take on, 267
- Coconut, cream of. See Cream of coconut
- Coconut oil, 202
- Coconut rum, 179
- Coconut syrup, 202
- Coconut water
 - in The Caribbean Goddess, 194
 - in Escape Hatch, 244
 - in Piña Colada Old Fashioned, 224
- Coconut-infused vermouth, 212
- Coffee, 201
- Coffee liqueur, 30
 - in Antakarlian Fire Dancer, 232
 - in Bahía de Montego, 273
 - in Escape to Molokai, 197
 - frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 15, 16
 - in Mr. Black & Gold, 273
- Coffee tincture
 - in 138 Swizzle, 265
 - recipe for, 265
- Cognac, 26
 - in The Glass Man, 232
 - in Overseas Telegram, 211
- Cold process simple syrup, 32
- Collectors, rum, 93-95
- Collins glasses, 43
- Colonial history, rum categorization by, 119-121
- Color
 - of aged rum, 112, 118
 - rum categorization by, 118-119
- Column distillation. See Continuous distillation
- Commando Grog, 166
- Commando Life, 171
- Continental aging, 110
- Continuous (column) distillation
 - history of, 119-121
 - process of, 108-109
- Cooler glasses, 43, 51
- Copperhead's Fang, 267
- Costa Rican rum, 133
- Cotton Mouth Killer, 261
- Country
 - distilleries by, 133-134
 - rum categorization by, 119
- Coy, Chris, 232, 267, 268, 276
- A Coy Decoy, 232
- Crane, Stephen, 231
- C.R.E.A.M., 252
- Cream of coconut, 35

in Angostura Colada, 211
in The Caribbean Goddess, 194
in Cherry Blossom, 180
in C.R.E.A.M., 252
in Day of the Dead, 257
frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 14, 16
in Machete Drinks, 265
in On a Coconut Island, 267
in Sonando, 275
in Toucan Dance, 248
in You're Not My Real Trinidad, 186

Crème de banane. See Banana liqueur
Crème de cacao, 148
Crème de cassis, 15, 16, 30
Crème de menthe, 179
Creole column stills, 120
Cruzan Blackstrap rum, 147
Cuban rum, 119, 120, 133
Cucumber, 228
Cucumber bitters, 152
Curaçao, 29-30
 in Cherry Blossom, 180
 in Cotton Mouth Killer, 261
 in Davy Jones, 206
 frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 15, 16
 in Jewel of the Sea, 236
 in Pining for the Fjords, 279
 in Port of Innsmouth, 168
 in Ship Has Come In, 149
 in Space Age Cooler, 278
Cutting boards, 38-39

D

Daiquiri
 basic recipe for, 7-8
 ratio of ingredients in, 86
 tiki drinks compared to, 8

Dalla Pola, Daniele, 161-162
Dark rum, 118-119
Davy Jones, 206
Day of the Dead, 257
The Death Star, 266
Demerara Distillers Ltd., 129
Demerara rum, 22-23
 in Bald Bastard Swizzle, 197
 categorization of, 22-23, 126, 127
 frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 15, 16
 in Headhunter's Bounty, 278
 in Neptune's Wrath, 273

 recipes highlighting, 137
 recommended brands of, 136
 in Ship Has Come In, 149
 in Three Dragons and a Dash, 279

Demerara rum, overproof, 23
 in Black Orchid, 179
 category of, 23, 127
 in Day of the Dead, 257
 frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 15, 16
 recommended brands of, 136
 in Welcome to Georgetown, 148

Demerara syrup, 33
 in Bali Hai Bastard, 190
 in No Quarter, 207

Denizen Merchant, 132, 136, 252
Devil You Know, 186
Devil's Reef (Tacoma bar), 50, 165
Digital notebooks, 88-90
Diller Room (Seattle bar), 176
Dilution
 with ice, 53-54
 in rum production, 113
Dirty Dick (Paris bar), 227-228
Disco Banana, 175
Distillation
 history of, 119-121
 process of, 105-109
Distilleries, overview of, 129-134
Doctor Funk, 14-15
Dominican rum, 133
Don the Beachcomber (bar), 176, 189
Donga Daiquiri, 267
Donga Punch
 matrix of ingredients in, 14-15
 modern take on, 267, 275

Don's Mix
 in Arkham Kula, 168
 in Commando Life, 171
 in Doomsayer's Grog, 168
 recipe for, 16, 168, 171, 212
 in South Seas Sleepwalker, 171
 in White Zombie, 212

Don's Spices No. 2
 in 138 Swizzle, 265
 in Plank Owner's Punch, 167
 in Port of Innsmouth, 168
 recipe for, 16, 167, 168, 180, 265
 in Tropical Thunder, 180

Don's Zombie Mix
 in Doomsayer's Grog, 168

 in Reanimator, 167
 recipe for, 167, 168

Doomsayer's Grog, 168
Doomsday Machine, 265
Dosage (Plantation), 113
Double old-fashioned glasses, 42-43, 51
Double retort pot stills, 107-108
Dr. Funk E. Sanchez, 268
Dr. Penn, 147
Drambuie, 211
Dried citrus wheels, 75-76
Drinking vinegar, 202
Drinkware. See Glassware
Dry ice, 77
Dunder, 105
Dusties, 95

E

E&A Scheer, 130, 132
Earl Gray syrup, 278
Eastern Sour
 matrix of ingredients in, 14-15
 modern take on, 269
Egg white, 276
El Diablo
 matrix of ingredients in, 14-15
 modern take on, 269
Elford, Chris, 209, 243
Elias, Oriol, 193-197
 career of, 193
 recipes by, 194-197, 265, 267, 269, 273, 278, 280
E150 spirit caramel, 113
Equipment
 basic types of, 38-42
 expanding beyond basics, 63-68
 ice-related, 37, 41, 42, 66-67
 juicing, 35, 39, 68
Escape Hatch, 244
Escape to Molokai, 197
Esotico Miami (bar), 161
Esotico Rum Cup, 162
Espíritu de Caracas, 228
Esters, 102, 104, 105
Ethanol, 102, 105
Ethyl acetate, 105
Extractive aging, 109-110

F

- Falernum, 28–29
 - in Aztec Warrior, 215
 - in Bald Bastard Swizzle, 197
 - in Bush Pilot, 270
 - in Commando Grog, 166
 - in Copperhead's Fang, 267
 - in Escape Hatch, 244
 - frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 15, 16
 - in The Glass Man, 232
 - in Instant Vacation, 224
 - in Jezebel's Blush, 260
 - in The Last Fang, 194
 - in Legends of the Hidden Temple, 147
 - in Mammoth Tusk, 152
 - in No Quarter, 207
 - in Oh Captain, My Captain, 155
 - in Passion Grove Swizzle, 215
 - in Pilikia, 257
 - in R. B. R. (Rum Barrel Remix), 276
 - recipe for, 82
 - in Riptide, 179
 - in Space Age Cooler, 278
 - substituting different, 86
 - in The Third Oath, 167
 - in Tropical Twilight Gloom, 202
 - in The Vacation, 159
 - in Village Punch, 275
 - in When the Levee Breaks, 270
 - in White Zombie, 212
- Falernum liqueur, 279
- Fassionola syrup
 - in Banana Life, 159
 - in The Death Star, 266
 - gold, 275, 276, 278
 - in Headhunter's Bounty, 278
 - in R. B. R. (Rum Barrel Remix), 276
 - in Space Age Cooler, 278
 - in Toucan Dance, 248
 - in Village Punch, 275
 - in Welcome to Georgetown, 148
 - in When the Levee Breaks, 270
- Fauxlernum syrup, 228
- Feet First in the Deep End, 201
- Fermentation, 102–105
- Fernet Branca
 - in Oh Captain, My Captain, 155
 - in Peace Be the Journey, 148
 - in When the Levee Breaks, 270
- Field Guide to Pupus, Tidbits & Exotic

- Provisions (Tiki Lindy), 205
- Filtered rum. See also Lightly aged/filtered rum
 - history of, 120
 - production of, 112
- Fire, 71–74
- Flavors, rum, 103–105
- Flower garnishes, 74
- Fog Cutter
 - matrix of ingredients in, 14–15
 - modern take on, 269
- The Forgotten Headhunter, 197
- Fort Defiance (Brooklyn bar), 209
- Four Suns, 219
- Foursquare Rum Distillery, 29, 123, 124
- French style rum, 120
- Frothers, 67
- Fruit, storage of, 35, 36. See also specific types
- Fruit juices. See Citrus juices; specific types
- Fruit liqueurs, 60
- Funky rum. See Jamaican rum
- Future Bars group, 157

G

- Galliano, 261
- Gardenia mix, 236
- Gargano, Lica, 123–124
- Garnishes
 - basic types of, 43–46
 - in choice of glassware, 51
 - constructed types of, 51–52
 - expanding beyond basics, 71–77
 - large-format, 91
- Giffard, 33, 60
- Gin, 26
 - in Alcatraz Island, 175
 - in A Coy Decoy, 232
 - in Davy Jones, 206
 - frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 15, 16
 - in Message in a Bottle, 236
 - navy strength, 122, 278
 - in Space Age Cooler, 278
 - in Transatlantic Orbit, 180
 - in Tropical Twilight Gloom, 202
 - in White Zombie, 212
- Ginger, 194
- Ginger beer
 - frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 15, 16
 - in Instant Vacation, 224
 - in Señor Diablo, 269
 - in The Stunner, 279
 - in Tortuga, 207
- Ginger syrup
 - in The Return of the Malachai, 147
 - in Riptide, 179
- The Glass Man, 232
- Glassware
 - approaches to choosing, 50, 51
 - basic types of, 42–43
 - chilling, 53–54
 - expanding beyond basics, 63–65
 - ice in, 37–38, 54
- Gold fassionola syrup
 - in Headhunter's Bounty, 278
 - in R. B. R. (Rum Barrel Remix), 276
 - recipe for, 275
 - in Village Punch, 275
- Gold rum, 22, 118. See also Moderately aged rum
- Grant, Jeanie, 173–175
- Grape juice, 185
- Grapefruit juice, 36
 - in Aztec Warrior, 215
 - in Bahía de Montego, 273
 - in Banana Life, 159
 - in The Banana Life Redux, 216
 - in Bush Pilot, 270
 - in Caribbean Zombie, 280
 - in Commando Grog, 166
 - in Donga Daiquiri, 267
 - in Escape to Molokai, 197
 - in Four Suns, 219
 - frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 14, 16
 - in Quarantine Order, 248
 - in Space Age Cooler, 278
 - in Tabu Tabu Grog, 190
 - in The Third Oath, 167
 - in Tongan Rhum Swizzle, 190
 - in Transatlantic Orbit, 180
 - white vs. ruby, 36
- Grapefruit liqueur
 - in A Coy Decoy, 232
 - in The Stunner, 279
- Grenadian rum, 133
- Grenadine, 33
 - in Dr. Funk E. Sanchez, 268

frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 14, 16
in Porch Light, 276
recipe for, 33, 80
in The Return of the Malachai, 147
in South Seas Sleepwalker, 171
Grogue, 98
Guadeloupe rum, 133-134
aged Agricole, 24
categorization of, 119
production of, 109, 115
Guanabana, 279
Guatemalan rum, 134
Guava juice, 261
Guava purée, 201
Guava syrup
in Copperhead's Fang, 267
recipe for, 267
Guyanese rum, 119, 120-121, 134. See also
Demerara rum

H

Haitian rum, 134
Hand citrus juicers, 35, 39, 68
Hard Heart and a Spiny Corset, 201
Hats Off to Berry, 228
Havana Club 3 year rum, 21
Hayes, Erin, 198-202
Hazelnut liqueur, 267
Headhunter's Bounty, 278
Heavy cream, 201
Herbstura
in Bahía de Montego, 273
in Bush Pilot, 270
in Caribbean Zombie, 280
recipe for, 270
Hibiscus, 147
Hibiscus tea, 253
Hibiscus-infused cinnamon syrup, 265
HMS Glasgow Grog, 145
Hogan, Shea, 257
Hogo, 24
Honey syrup (honey mix), 33
in Arkham Kula, 168
in Doomsayer's Grog, 168
frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 14, 16
in Jade Idol, 179
in Machete Drinks, 265
in Neptune's Wrath, 273
in Plank Owner's Punch, 167
recipes for, 33, 80
rosemary, 145
Sergio's Hot, 273
in South Seas Sleepwalker, 171
in Tabu Tabu Grog, 190
in Three Scots and a Dash, 211
Horchata, 186
Hurricane
matrix of ingredients in, 14-15
modern take on, 270
Hurricane glasses, 64

I

Haitian rum, 134
Hand citrus juicers, 35, 39, 68
Hard Heart and a Spiny Corset, 201
Hats Off to Berry, 228
Havana Club 3 year rum, 21
Hayes, Erin, 198-202
Hazelnut liqueur, 267
Headhunter's Bounty, 278
Heavy cream, 201
Herbstura
in Bahía de Montego, 273
in Bush Pilot, 270
in Caribbean Zombie, 280
recipe for, 270
Hibiscus, 147
Hibiscus tea, 253
Hibiscus-infused cinnamon syrup, 265
HMS Glasgow Grog, 145
Hogan, Shea, 257
Hogo, 24
Honey syrup (honey mix), 33
in Arkham Kula, 168
in Doomsayer's Grog, 168
frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 14, 16
in Jade Idol, 179
in Machete Drinks, 265
in Neptune's Wrath, 273
in Plank Owner's Punch, 167
recipes for, 33, 80
rosemary, 145
Sergio's Hot, 273
in South Seas Sleepwalker, 171
in Tabu Tabu Grog, 190
in Three Scots and a Dash, 211

Horchata, 186
Hurricane
matrix of ingredients in, 14-15
modern take on, 270
Hurricane glasses, 64

J

Jade Idol, 179
Jagermeister, 244
Jamaican rum, 21, 134
in Angostura Colada, 211
in Arkham Kula, 168
in Bahía de Montego, 273
in Bald Bastard Swizzle, 197
in Bourbon Cocktail, 186
in Bush Pilot, 270
in Caribbean Zombie, 280
categorization of, 21, 119, 120-121,
126, 127
colonial history of, 120-121
in Day of the Dead, 257
diversity of, 119
in Dr. Funk E. Sanchez, 268
in Escape to Molokai, 197
in The Forgotten Headhunter, 197
frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 14, 16,
17
in The Glass Man, 232
in Headhunter's Bounty, 278
in Jamaican Spiced Swizzle #3, 194
in Jungle Doctor, 216
in Lost Lake, 240
in Message in a Bottle, 236
in Neptune's Wrath, 273
in Pining for the Fjords, 279
production of, 107-108, 115
in Quarantine Order, 248
in R. B. R. (Rum Barrel Remix), 276
in Reanimator, 179
recipes highlighting, 137
recommended brands of, 136
in Riptide, 179
in Second Runner Up, 148
in Ship Has Come In, 149
in South Seas Sleepwalker, 171
in Space Age Cooler, 278
in Village Punch, 275
in Waikiki at Dusk Forever, 201

Jamaican rum, overproof, 24-26
 in Angostura Colada, 211
 in Aztec Warrior, 215
 in Black Orchid, 179
 in Catch a Fire, 224
 category of, 24-26, 127
 in Copperhead's Fang, 267
 in The Death Star, 266
 in Disco Banana, 175
 in Doomsday Machine, 265
 in Dr. Funk E. Sanchez, 268
 in HMS Glasgow Grog, 145
 in Jade Idol, 179
 in Jungle Doctor, 216
 in Oh Captain, My Captain, 155
 in Pacific Theatre, 144
 in Passion Grove Swizzle, 215
 in Peace Be the Journey, 148
 recommended brands of, 136
 in Red Wedding, 253
 in Salty in All the Right Places, 202
 in Sonando, 275
 in Toucan Dance, 248
 in Waikiki at Dusk Forever, 201
 in When the Levee Breaks, 270

Jamaican Spiced Swizzle #3, 194

Jet Pilot
 as elaborate daiquiri, 8
 matrix of ingredients in, 14-15
 modern take on, 270

Jewel of the Sea, 236

Jezebel's Blush, 260

Jiggers, 39

John D. Taylor Velvet falernum, 29, 86

Juices, 35-36. See also specific types
 frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 14, 16
 preparing, 35, 39, 68

Juicing equipment
 basic types of, 35, 39
 expanding beyond basics, 68

Jungle Bird, 9, 87-88

Jungle Doctor, 60, 88, 216

K

Kahlua, 30

King, Marie, 189-191

Knives, citrus, 38-39

Kraken, 118-119

L

Laki Kane (London bar), 235-236

Large format tiki drinks, 90-91

The Last Fang, 194

Lau Lana, 191

Legends of the Hidden Temple, 147

Lemon(s), storage of, 35, 36

Lemon extract, in fire garnishes, 73-74

Lemon Hart 151 rum, 23

Lemon juice, 36
 in Agricole Scorpion, 278
 in Alcatraz Island, 175
 in Apricole Swizzle, 216
 in Bird of Paradise, 159
 in Bourbon Cocktail, 186
 in By the Toe, 269
 in Catch a Fire, 224
 in Copperhead's Fang, 267
 in Davy Jones, 206
 in Day of the Dead, 257
 in Escape Hatch, 244
 in Espiritu de Caracas, 228
 in The Forgotten Headhunter, 197
 in Four Suns, 219
 frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 14, 16
 in The Glass Man, 232
 in HMS Glasgow Grog, 145
 in I Should Coco, 212
 in Instant Vacation, 224
 in Jade Idol, 179
 in Machete Drinks, 265
 in The Martinique Lighthouse, 269
 in Message in a Bottle, 236
 in Oh Captain, My Captain, 155
 in On a Coconut Island, 267
 in Overseas Telegram, 211
 in Passion Grove Swizzle, 215
 in Pineapple Paralysis, 275
 in Plank Owner's Punch, 167
 in Polynesian Spell II, 185
 in Porch Light, 276
 preparing, 35
 in Reanimator, 167
 in Shores of Indaal, 219
 substituting lime juice for, 36
 in Sundress Weather, 270
 in There's Always Money in the Banana Stand, 212
 in Three Scots and a Dash, 211
 in Three Treasures, 175

in Tropical Thunder, 180
 in Welcome to Georgetown, 148
 in When the Levee Breaks, 270

Lemongrass rum infusion, 224

Lewis bags, 41, 66

Libbey glassware, 64

Light rum, 118, 120

Lightly aged/filtered rum, 21-22
 in Banana Life, 159
 in The Banana Life Redux, 216
 in Basic Beach, 260
 category of, 21-22, 127
 in Cherry Blossom, 180
 in Espiritu de Caracas, 228
 in Four Suns, 219
 frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 15, 16
 in Jezebel's Blush, 260
 in Lau Lana, 191
 in Legends of the Hidden Temple, 147
 in Maghrebi Mint Sour, 244
 in Pacific Theatre, 144
 in Pagan Breakfast, 248
 in Passion Grove Swizzle, 215
 recipes highlighting, 137
 recommended brands of, 136
 in The Return of the Malachai, 147
 in Slippah Sippah, 276
 in Toucan Dance, 248
 in The Vacation, 159
 in Welcome to Georgetown, 148
 in White Zombie, 212

Lime(s)
 as garnishes, 44
 storage of, 35, 36

Lime juice, 35
 in Angostura Colada, 211
 in Antakarian Fire Dancer, 232
 in Arkham Kula, 168
 in Aztec Warrior, 215
 in Bahía de Montego, 273
 in The Bainbridge, 219
 in Bald Bastard Swizzle, 197
 in Bali Hai Bastard, 190
 in Banana Life, 159
 in The Banana Life Redux, 216
 in Basic Beach, 260
 in Black Orchid, 179
 in Bush Pilot, 270
 in The Caribbean Goddess, 194
 in Caribbean Zombie, 280

in Cherry Blossom, 180
in Commando Grog, 166
in Commando Life, 171
in A Coy Decoy, 232
in C.R.E.A.M., 252
in Day of the Dead, 257
in The Death Star, 266
in Devil You Know, 186
in Disco Banana, 175
in Donga Daiquiri, 267
in Doomsayer's Grog, 168
in Doomsday Machine, 265
in Dr. Funk E. Sanchez, 268
in Dr. Penn, 147
in Escape to Molokai, 197
in Esotico Rum Cup, 162
in Espíritu de Caracas, 228
frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 14, 16, 17, 35
in Hard Heart and a Spiny Corset, 201
in Hats Off to Berry, 228
in Headhunter's Bounty, 278
in Jade Idol, 179
in Jamaican Spiced Swizzle #3, 194
in Jezebel's Blush, 260
in Jungle Doctor, 216
in The Last Fang, 194
in Lau Lana, 191
in Legends of the Hidden Temple, 147
in Lost Lake, 240
in Machete Drinks, 265
in Maghrebi Mint Sour, 244
in Mammoth Tusk, 152
in Neptune's Wrath, 273
in No Quarter, 207
in Oh Captain, My Captain, 155
in 138 Swizzle, 265
in Pacific Theatre, 144
in Pagan Breakfast, 248
in Pilikia, 257
in Pining for the Fjords, 279
in Port of Innsmouth, 168
preparing, 35
in Quarantine Order, 248
in R. B. R. (Rum Barrel Remix), 276
in Ravagers Funeral, 152
in Red Wedding, 253
in The Return of the Malachai, 147
in The Reverend's Tai, 215
in Riptide, 179

in Salty in All the Right Places, 202
in Second Runner Up, 148
in Señor Diablo, 269
in Ship Has Come In, 149
in Slippah Sippah, 276
in Sonando, 275
in South Seas Sleepwalker, 171
in Space Age Cooler, 278
in The Stunner, 279
substituting lemon juice for, 36
in Tabu Tabu Grog, 190
in The Third Oath, 167
in Three Dragons and a Dash, 279
in Tongan Rhum Swizzle, 190
in Tortuga, 207
in Toucan Dance, 248
in Transatlantic Orbit, 180
in Trididadi Issues, 152
in Tropical Twilight Gloom, 202
in The Vacation, 159
in Village Punch, 275
in White Zombie, 212
in Wiki Wiki, 185
in You're Not My Real Trinidad, 186
Liqueurs, 28–30. See also specific types
basic types of, 28–30
expanding beyond basics, 60
frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 15, 16
recipes for, 79–82
substituting different, 86
Local Edition (San Francisco bar), 157
Lono (Hollywood bar), 151
Lost Lake (Chicago bar), 198, 239–241
Lost Lake (cocktail), 240
L'Oursin (Seattle bar), 209
Luxardo, 60
Lychee liqueur, 252

M

Machete Drinks, 265
Madeira
in Antakarian Fire Dancer, 232
in Bourbon Cocktail, 186
Maggie's Farm, 29, 147
Maghrebi Mint Sour, 244
Mai Kai (Fort Lauderdale bar), 71
Mai Tai
as elaborate daiquiri, 8
glasses used for, 51

invention of, 93
matrix of ingredients in, 14–15
modern take on, 270
Mallets, 41
Mammoth Tusk, 152
Mandarin orange juice, 236
Mango brandy, 186
Mango soda, 273
Mango syrup
in Copperhead's Fang, 267
recipe for, 267
in The Vacation, 159
Maraschino liqueur, 60
in Lost Lake, 240
in White Zombie, 212
Margarita, 7–8
The Martinique Lighthouse, 269
Martinique rum, 134
aged Agricole, 24
categorization of, 119, 120–121
colonial history of, 120–121
production of, 109, 115
Mash, 102–103
Masticating juicers, 68
Maxwell, Brian, 143–149
career of, 143
recipes by, 144–149, 266, 269, 270, 273, 279
McGee, Paul, 239
Measuring jiggers, 39
Melon liquor, 265
Merchants, rum, 129–133
Message in a Bottle, 236
Metal swizzle cups, 65
Mexican rum, 175
Meyer lemons, 36
Mezcal
in Bali Hai Bastard, 190
in Devil You Know, 186
in Machete Drinks, 265
in Pilikia, 257
in Ravagers Funeral, 152
in Red Wedding, 253
in The Return of the Malachai, 147
in Señor Diablo, 269
in The Stunner, 279
Midori, 260
Minimalist Tiki
core principles of, 3–4
goal of, 11

- Minimalist Tiki Classic Thirty
 - criteria for choosing, 11-12
 - frequency of ingredient use in, 13-17
 - list of, 13
 - matrix of ingredients of, 14-15
 - modern takes on, 263-280
 - Mint
 - as garnish, 43
 - in Tropical Twilight Gloom, 202
 - Mixing rum, vs. sipping rum, 121
 - Moderately aged rum, 22
 - in The Bainbridge, 219
 - in Black Orchid, 179
 - in Caribbean Zombie, 280
 - category of, 22, 126-127
 - in Commando Grog, 166
 - in Day of the Dead, 257
 - in Doomsayer's Grog, 168
 - in Escape Hatch, 244
 - in Esotico Rum Cup, 162
 - in Feet First in the Deep End, 201
 - frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 15, 16
 - in The Glass Man, 232
 - in Legends of the Hidden Temple, 147
 - in Mr. Black & Gold, 273
 - in Neptune's Wrath, 273
 - in No Quarter, 207
 - in Plank Owner's Punch, 167
 - in Port of Innsmouth, 168
 - in R. B. R. (Rum Barrel Remix), 276
 - recipes highlighting, 137
 - recommended brands of, 136
 - in Riptide, 179
 - in Rum River Mystic, 241
 - in South Seas Sleepwalker, 171
 - in Three Dragons and a Dash, 279
 - in Trididadi Issues, 152
 - in Waikiki at Dusk Forever, 201
 - in When the Levee Breaks, 270
 - Molasses
 - in Bahía de Montego, 273
 - in Caribbean Zombie, 280
 - Molasses-based rum
 - categorization of, 21, 22
 - production of, 102-103
 - in When the Levee Breaks, 270
 - Montego Bay
 - matrix of ingredients in, 14-15
 - modern take on, 273
 - Moore, Rod, 257
 - Morgenthaler, Jeffrey, 5
 - Moroccan mint tea syrup, 244
 - Mr. Bali Hai
 - matrix of ingredients in, 14-15
 - modern take on, 273
 - Mr. Black & Gold, 273
 - Mugs, tiki
 - as basic glassware, 43
 - chilling, 54
 - custom, 63-64
 - Multicolumn stills, 109
 - Muráth, Gergö "Sergio"
 - career of, 280
 - recipes by, 265, 269, 273, 278, 279
- N**
- Navy Grog
 - glasses used for, 51
 - matrix of ingredients in, 14-15
 - modern take on, 273
 - Navy rum, 121-123
 - categorization of, 121-123
 - Demerara component of, 23
 - vs. navy strength, 122
 - Navy Strength (Seattle bar), 243-244
 - Navy strength gin, 122, 278
 - Navy strength rum, 121-123
 - Navy strength spirits, 122
 - Neptune's Wrath, 273
 - New tiki recipes, creating, 87-88
 - Nicaraguan rum, 134
 - No Quarter, 207
 - NoMi Lounge (Chicago bar), 183
 - Notebooks, digital, 88-90
 - Nu Lounge Bar (Bologna bar), 161
 - #9 syrup, 162
 - Nutmeg syrup
 - in Four Suns, 219
 - recipe for, 81
- O**
- Oh Captain, My Captain, 155
 - On a Coconut Island, 267
 - 138 Swizzle, 265
 - 151 Swizzle
 - glassware for, 65
 - matrix of ingredients in, 14-15
 - modern take on, 265
 - Orange bitters, 28
 - in Alcatraz Island, 175
 - in The Martinique Lighthouse, 269
 - Orange juice, 36
 - in Agricole Scorpion, 278
 - in Arkham Kula, 168
 - in Black Orchid, 179
 - blood, 265
 - in By the Toe, 269
 - in Day of the Dead, 257
 - in Doomsday Machine, 265
 - in Escape to Molokai, 197
 - in The Forgotten Headhunter, 197
 - frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 14, 16
 - in Instant Vacation, 224
 - in Jewel of the Sea, 236
 - in The Last Fang, 194
 - in Machete Drinks, 265
 - mandarin, 236
 - as minor ingredient in tiki drinks, 8-9
 - in No Quarter, 207
 - prepared at home vs. packaged, 36
 - in Ship Has Come In, 149
 - in Shores of Indaal, 219
 - in Slippah Sippah, 276
 - in Sonando, 275
 - in Tortuga, 207
 - in Toucan Dance, 248
 - in When the Levee Breaks, 270
 - Orange liqueur, 29-30
 - in Jade Idol, 179
 - in Pineapple Paralysis, 275
 - in The Reverend's Tai, 215
 - substituting different, 86
 - Orchid garnishes, 74
 - Orgeat, 33
 - in Agricole Scorpion, 278
 - in Alcatraz Island, 175
 - in Antakarlian Fire Dancer, 232
 - in Apricole Swizzle, 216
 - in The Bainbridge, 219
 - in By the Toe, 269
 - in Commando Grog, 166
 - in C.R.E.A.M., 252
 - in Davy Jones, 206
 - in Devil You Know, 186
 - differences in sweetness of, 32
 - frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 14, 16
 - in The Glass Man, 232
 - in Legends of the Hidden Temple, 147

- in Mammoth Tusk, 152
- in Pineapple Paralysis, 275
- in The Reverend's Tai, 215
- in Slippah Sippah, 276
- in Sundress Weather, 270
- in Trididadi Issues, 152

Original producers, 130

Overman, Zac, 88, 209-212

Overproof rum, 122-123. See also Demerara rum, overproof; Jamaican rum, overproof

Overseas Telegram, 211

Oxidative aging, 110

P

Pacific Theatre, 144

Pagan Breakfast, 248

Pagan Idol (San Francisco bar), 157, 173, 247-248

Painkiller

- lack of sour component in, 9, 12
- matrix of ingredients in, 14-15
- modern take on, 275

Pamplemousse liqueur, 278

Panamanian rum, 134

Pandan syrup

- in Pacific Theatre, 144
- recipe for, 144, 279
- in Three Dragons and a Dash, 279

Panofsky, Lindy. See Tiki Lindy

Papaya purée, 202

Paper umbrellas, 46

Paring knives, 38

Parks, Daniel "Doc," 157-159

- career of, 157
- recipes by, 158-159, 267, 275, 276, 278

Passion fruit liqueur, 155

Passion fruit purée

- in Bali Hai Bastard, 190
- in The Glass Man, 232
- in Tabu Tabu Grog, 190
- in White Zombie, 212

Passion fruit syrup, 33

- in Arkham Kula, 168
- in The Banana Life Redux, 216
- in Black Orchid, 179
- in By the Toe, 269
- in Caribbean Zombie, 280
- in Commando Life, 171
- in Escape to Molokai, 197
- frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 14, 16
- in HMS Glasgow Grog, 145
- in I Should Coco, 212
- in The Last Fang, 194
- in Lost Lake, 240
- in Machete Drinks, 265
- in Mammoth Tusk, 152
- in The Martinique Lighthouse, 269
- in Mr. Black & Gold, 273
- in Pacific Theatre, 144
- in Passion Grove Swizzle, 215
- in Porch Light, 276
- in Quarantine Order, 248
- in Reanimator, 167
- recipe for, 33, 81
- in Red Wedding, 253
- in Riptide, 179
- in Second Runner Up, 148
- in Sonando, 275
- in Three Scots and a Dash, 211
- in Tropical Thunder, 180
- in Waikiki at Dusk Forever, 201

Passion fruit vanilla syrup, 159

Passion Grove Swizzle, 215

Peace Be the Journey, 148

Peach liqueur, 260

Pear brandy, 270

Peated Scotch whisky, 88

- in Shores of Indaal, 219
- in There's Always Money in the Banana Stand, 212
- in Three Scots and a Dash, 211

Pernod, 29

- in Day of the Dead, 257
- in Escape to Molokai, 197
- frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 15, 16
- in Hats Off to Berry, 228

Peruvian rum, 134

Peychaud's Bitters

- in Bald Bastard Swizzle, 197
- in Señor Diablo, 269

Pietrek, Matt, recipes by, 215-219

Pilikia, 257

Pilsner glasses, 64

Pimento dram, 30

- in Bahía de Montego, 273
- in Bald Bastard Swizzle, 197
- in The Caribbean Goddess, 194
- in Commando Grog, 166
- in Day of the Dead, 257
- in Doomsayer's Grog, 168
- in Escape to Molokai, 197
- in The Forgotten Headhunter, 197
- frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 15, 16
- in Lau Lana, 191
- in Neptune's Wrath, 273
- in R. B. R. (Rum Barrel Remix), 276
- in South Seas Sleepwalker, 171
- in Tabu Tabu Grog, 190
- in There's Always Money in the Banana Stand, 212
- in Three Dragons and a Dash, 279
- in Three Scots and a Dash, 211
- in Tongan Rhum Swizzle, 190

Piña Colada, 9

Piña Colada Old Fashioned, 224

Pineapple

- as garnish, 44, 51
- in Tropical Twilight Gloom, 202

Pineapple drinking vinegar, 202

Pineapple infused rum, 224

Pineapple juice, 36

- acid-adjusted, 265
- in Angostura Colada, 211
- in Antakarian Fire Dancer, 232
- in The Bainbridge, 219
- in Bali Hai Bastard, 190
- in Banana Life, 159
- in The Banana Life Redux, 216
- in Basic Beach, 260
- in Caribbean Zombie, 280
- in Catch a Fire, 224
- in Cherry Blossom, 180
- in A Coy Decoy, 232
- in Day of the Dead, 257
- in Devil You Know, 186
- in Doomsday Machine, 265
- frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 14, 16
- in Hard Heart and a Spiny Corset, 201
- in HMS Glasgow Grog, 145
- in Lost Lake, 240
- in Machete Drinks, 265
- in Maghrebi Mint Sour, 244
- in Mammoth Tusk, 152
- in The Martinique Lighthouse, 269
- as minor ingredient in tiki drinks, 8-9
- in Mr. Black & Gold, 273
- in No Quarter, 207
- in Pacific Theatre, 144

- in Passion Grove Swizzle, 215
- in Pilikia, 257
- in Pineapple Paralysis, 275
- in Polynesian Spell II, 185
- prepared at home vs. packaged, 36, 68
- in R. B. R. (Rum Barrel Remix), 276
- in Second Runner Up, 148
- in Slippah Sippah, 276
- in spindle blenders and frothers, 66, 67
- in Three Treasures, 175
- in Trididadi Issues, 152
- in The Vacation, 159
- in Wiki Wiki, 185
- in You're Not My Real Trinidad, 186
- Pineapple liqueur, 216
- Pineapple Paralysis, 275
- Pineapple rum
 - in Bali Hai Bastard, 190
 - in Bush Pilot, 270
 - in Commando Life, 171
 - in The Death Star, 266
 - in Oh Captain, My Captain, 155
 - in Pineapple Paralysis, 275
 - in The Reverend's Tai, 215
 - in Slippah Sippah, 276
 - in The Stunner, 279
- Pineapple syrup, 278
- Pining for the Fjords, 279
- Pisco, 88
 - in The Death Star, 266
 - in Doomsday Machine, 265
 - in The Martinique Lighthouse, 269
 - in The Vacation, 159
 - in White Zombie, 212
- Pisco Punch, 88
- Plank Owner's Punch, 167
- Plantation O.F.T.D., 136
 - in Antakarian Fire Dancer, 232
 - in Arkham Kula, 168
 - in Black Orchid, 179
 - in Bush Pilot, 270
 - in Caribbean Zombie, 280
 - in Commando Grog, 166
 - in Doomsayer's Grog, 168
 - in Escape to Molokai, 197
 - in Hats Off to Berry, 228
 - in Oh Captain, My Captain, 155
 - in 138 Swizzle, 265
 - in Plank Owner's Punch, 167
 - in R. B. R. (Rum Barrel Remix), 276
 - in Reanimator, 167
 - in The Reverend's Tai, 215
 - in Tabu Tabu Grog, 190
 - in The Third Oath, 167
 - in Tropical Thunder, 180
 - in Waikiki at Dusk Forever, 201
- Plantation Rum, 110, 113, 132-133
- Plantation Stiggins' Fancy Pineapple Rum, 136
 - in Bush Pilot, 270
 - in Commando Life, 171
 - in Oh Captain, My Captain, 155
 - in Pineapple Paralysis, 275
 - in The Reverend's Tai, 215
 - in Slippah Sippah, 276
 - in The Stunner, 279
- Planter's Punch
 - matrix of ingredients in, 14-15
 - Stephen Remsberg's recipe for, 17
- Polynesian Paralysis
 - matrix of ingredients in, 14-15
 - modern take on, 275
- Polynesian Resort mugs, 64
- Polynesian Spell II, 185
- Pomegranate. See Grenadine
- Pomegranate molasses, 147
- Porch Light, 276
- Port Light
 - matrix of ingredients in, 14-15
 - modern take on, 276
- Port of Innsmouth, 168
- Pot distillation. See Batch distillation
- Prestwood, William, 247-248
- Private labels, 130-132
- Proof system, 5
- Proto-tiki drinks, 9
- Puerto Rican rum, 119, 134
- Pumpkin spiced syrup, 197
- Punches, for large groups, 90-91
- Punsch, 60, 267
- Pusser's, 122, 129, 236

Q

- Quarantine Order, 248
- Queens Park Swizzle, 9
- Quinquina
 - in Rum River Mystic, 241
 - in Three Treasures, 175

R

- R. B. R. (Rum Barrel Remix), 276
- Radev, Georgi, 235
- Ratios, changing, 85-86
- Ravagers Funeral, 152
- Reamers, 39, 68
- Reanimator, 167
- Recipe improvisation, 85-91
- Recommended rum brands, 135-136
- Red bush tea, 236
- Red Wedding, 253
- Regulations, rum, 115
- Remsberg, Stephen, 17, 95
- The Return of the Malachai, 147
- The Reverend's Tai, 215
- Rhum, use of term, 24, 98
- Riptide, 179
- Rosé wine, 266
- Rosemary honey syrup, 145
- Rose's, 33, 80
- Royal Hawaiian Mai Tai
 - matrix of ingredients in, 14-15
 - modern take on, 276
- Rum(s), 19-26. See also specific types
 - alternative names for, 98
 - collecting historical bottles of, 93-95
 - expanding beyond basics, 59-60
 - frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 14-15, 16
 - in origins of tiki, 93-95
 - overview of brands of, 129-134
 - recommended brands of, 135-136
 - science of flavors of, 103-105
 - substituting different, 86-87
- Rum Barrel
 - matrix of ingredients in, 14-15
 - modern take on, 276
- Rum Barrel Remix (R. B. R.), 276
- Rum categorizations, 117-127. See also specific types
 - Cate system of, 124-126
 - by colonial history, 119-121
 - by color, 118-119
 - by country, 119
 - Gargano system of, 123-124
 - Minimalist approach to, 16, 19-26, 126-127
 - navy/navy strength, 121-123
 - by sipping vs. mixing, 121
- Rum industry, overview of, 129-134

Rum merchants, 129-133
Rum production, 97-115
 aging in, 109-112
 blending in, 113
 colonial history of, 119-121
 distillation in, 105-109
 fermentation in, 102-105
 regulations on, 115
 stripping run in, 107
 sugar cane processing in, 97-102
 sweetening in, 114-115
 wash in, 105-106
Rum River Mystic, 241
Rumba (Seattle bar), 251-253
Rye whiskey
 in Bali Hai Bastard, 190
 in Copperhead's Fang, 267
 in Porch Light, 276
 in Rum River Mystic, 241

S

Saline solution
 recipe for, 202
 in Salty in All the Right Places, 202
 in Wiki Wiki, 185
Salt, 270
Salted banana syrup, 265
Salty in All the Right Places, 202
Sanchez, Eli, 232, 267, 268
Saturn
 matrix of ingredients in, 14-15
 modern take on, 278
Schuder, Scotty, 227
Scorpion
 matrix of ingredients in, 14-15
 modern take on, 278
Scotch bonnet simple syrup, 224
Scotch whisky
 in HMS Glasgow Grog, 145
 in non-traditional tiki recipes, 88
 peated, 88, 211, 212, 219
 production of, 107
 regulations on, 115
 in Shores of Indaal, 219
 in There's Always Money in the Banana Stand, 212
 in Three Scots and a Dash, 211
Second Runner Up, 148
Secret ingredient blends, 16

Señor Diablo, 269
Sergio's hot honey syrup
 in Neptune's Wrath, 273
 recipe for, 273
Sergio's T-mix
 in Neptune's Wrath, 273
 recipe for, 273
Ses Barrios, Sebastian, 227-228
Shakers, 39-41
 functions of, 53
 how to use, 53-54
 ice in, 37-38, 53-54
 order of ingredients added to, 52
 vs. spindle blenders, 66, 141, 263
 types of, 39-41
Shameful Tiki Room (Vancouver bar), 255-257
Sherry, 112
 in Alcatraz Island, 175
 in The Martinique Lighthouse, 269
 in Porch Light, 276
 in Three Dragons and a Dash, 279
 in You're Not My Real Trinidad, 186
Ship Has Come In, 149
Shores of Indaal, 88, 219
Shrunken Skull
 matrix of ingredients in, 14-15
 modern take on, 278
Sidecar, 8
Silver rum, 22, 118. See also Lightly aged/
filtered rum
Simple syrup, 32-33
 cold process, 32
 in Cotton Mouth Killer, 261
 frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 14, 16, 17
 in Jungle Doctor, 216
 in Lau Lana, 191
 in Pagan Breakfast, 248
 proportion of sugar to water in, 30-32
 scotch bonnet, 224
 in White Zombie, 212
Singapore Sling, 9
Sipping rum, vs. mixing rum, 121
Skewers, bamboo knot, 46
Slippah Sippah, 276
Small Hand Foods, 32, 33
Smith & Cross rum, 21
Smuggler's Cove (Cate and Cate), 5, 66, 88, 124-126

Smuggler's Cove (San Francisco bar), 19, 126
Solera aging, 112
Sonando, 275
Sour ale, 211
Sour components
 in definition of tiki drinks, 8
 options for, 7
 ratio of sweet to, 86
Sour drinks, basic template for, 7
South Seas Sleepwalker, 171
Space Age Cooler, 278
The Space Age garnish, 52
Spanish style rum, 120
Sparkling wine
 in I Should Coco, 212
 in Jezebel's Blush, 260
Spiced rum
 categorization of, 123
 color of, 118-119
 in Esotico Rum Cup, 162
 production of, 114
Spindle blenders, 66-67, 141, 263
The Spinnaker garnish, 51-52
Spirit caramel, 113, 118
Spirits other than rum, 15, 26-28. See also
specific types
Sprouse, Brady, 215
St. Croix rum, 134
St. Lucia rum, 134
Starfruit cordial, 185
Storage, of fruit, 35, 36
Strawberries, 191
Straws, 42, 91
The Stunner, 279
Substitutions, ingredient, 86-87
Suffering Bastard
 matrix of ingredients in, 14-15
 modern take on, 279
Sugar. See also Syrups
 added in rum production, 114-115
 in fire garnishes, 74
 proportion of water to, in syrups, 30-32
 types of, in sugar cane, 100
Sugar cane, in rum production, 97-102
Sugar cane syrup, 185
Sundress Weather, 270
Swedish punsch, 60
Sweet components
 in definition of tiki drinks, 8-9

options for, 7
ratio of sour to, 86
Sweetening, during rum production, 114-115
Syrups, 30-35. See also specific types
definition of, 30
frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 14, 16
proportion of sugar to water in, 30-32
recipes for, 79-82
shelf life of, 32, 79
types of, 32-35

T

Tabu Tabu Grog, 190
Tacoma Cabana, 165
Tamarind syrup, 152
Tangerine juice, 273
Tea
black, 175
butterfly pea, 186
Earl Gray syrup, 278
hibiscus, 253
Moroccan mint, 244
red bush, 236
Tempus Fugit, 60
Tequila, 28
in Devil You Know, 186
frequency of use in Classic Thirty, 15, 16
in Hard Heart and a Spiny Corset, 201
in The Martinique Lighthouse, 269
in Ravagers Funeral, 152
in Señor Diablo, 269
in Three Treasures, 175
Terroir, of sugar cane, 98
Test Pilot
matrix of ingredients in, 14-15
modern take on, 279
Thai basil tincture, 279
There's Always Money in the Banana Stand, 212
The Third Oath, 167
Three Dots and a Dash (Chicago bar), 183
Three Dots and a Dash (cocktail)
matrix of ingredients in, 14-15
modern take on, 279
Three Dragons and a Dash, 279
Three of Strong (blog), 193
Three Scots and a Dash, 211
Three Treasures, 175

Tiki bars, 221-261. See also specific bars
Tiki drinks, 7-9
classic (See Classic tiki drinks)
complexity of, 3
creating new recipes for, 87-88
defining characteristics of, 8-9
Golden Age of, 4, 5, 11
history of, 5
improvisation with, 85-91
rum in origins of, 93-95
steps in construction of, 49-54
vs. tropical drinks, 7-9
Tiki Lindy (Lindy Panofsky), 205-207
Tiki mugs. See Mugs
Tiki-Kon, 165
Tippleman's, 29
Tobias, Charles, 122
Tonga Hut (bar), 189
Tonga Room (San Francisco bar), 247
Tongan Rhum Swizzle, 190
Tools. See Equipment
Tortuga, 207
Toucan Dance, 248
Trader Vic. See Bergeron, Victor
Trader Vic's (Emeryville bar), 157, 205
Trailer Happiness (London bar), 259-261, 280
Transatlantic Orbit, 180
Trinidad Issues, 152
Trinidadian rum, 134
Tropic of Cancer, 155
Tropical aging, 110
Tropical bitters
in Alcatraz Island, 175
in Transatlantic Orbit, 180
Tropical drinks, vs. tiki drinks, 7-9
Tropical Paradise garnish, 52
Tropical Thunder, 180
Tropical Twilight Gloom, 202

U

Umbrellas, paper, 46
Unaged rum, 109

V

The Vacation, 159
Vanilla Angostura bitters
in The Vacation, 159
in Village Punch, 275

Vanilla liqueur
in Agricole Scorpion, 278
in Peace Be the Journey, 148
Vanilla syrup
in Hard Heart and a Spiny Corset, 201
recipe for, 81
in Sonando, 275
Velier, 132-133
Venezuelan rum, 134
Vermouth
in I Should Coco, 212
in Peace Be the Journey, 148
Village Punch, 275
Vinegar, drinking, 202
Vodka, 109

W

Waikiki at Dusk Forever, 201
Walnut bitters, 232
Welcome to Georgetown, 148
Well bottles, 19
When the Levee Breaks, 270
Whiskey, 26-28. See also Bourbon; Rye whiskey; Scotch whisky
White rum, 21, 22, 118. See also Lightly aged/filtered rum
White Zombie, 88, 212
Wiki Wiki, 185
Wine. See Rosé wine; Sparkling wine
Wojslaw, Justin, 176-180
Wray & Nephew rum, 93, 118, 261

Y

Yeast, 102-105
Yellin, Paul, 223
You're Not My Real Trinidad, 186

Z

Zombie (cocktail)
matrix of ingredients in, 14-15
modern take on, 280
Zombie glasses, 43
Zombie Village (San Francisco bar), 157, 247

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Photography courtesy of Dirty Dick: 226, 228, 229

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Photography courtesy of Trailer Happiness: 258, 259, 260

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