

in the MIX

SAY CHEERS AT OUR TOP 20 BARS AROUND THE GLOBE.

WRITER DAVID PRIOR

What makes a great bar? What are the criteria for deciding which is best and why? It's an uncertain set of standards, but what is certain is that it's a very different game to judging restaurants.

Imagine choosing to book a meal in a dimly lit, nostalgic restaurant with a 1920s-inspired menu, tucked away in the basement of a hotel? Unappealing, absurd! However, it's a description that fits many of the truly great bars around the world, and is a comparison that also goes to highlight how removed the aesthetic and values are of a sophisticated drinking culture.

A bar may be new and extraordinarily innovative but it will most often still be immensely nostalgic. While that style currently

pervades many areas of modern life — think the now familiar retro barber shop haircuts, Edison lightbulbs, and fashion verging on period — it is safe to say that when that trend ebbs, for those who tend bar it will persist.

It is a strange phenomenon, but one thing all of the great bars around the world have in common is a sense of history and a commitment to another era of hospitality. Patina is prized; as is institution status. Drinkers, too, not only want their tippie of choice perfectly executed but also to feel an atmosphere, a sexiness, a sense of glamour.

The Americans first perfected the art of the cocktail and the artistry of tending bar. It is for that reason their style still dominates globally.

In the past decade, countless 'golden age' and 'Prohibition-era' cocktail bars have opened in the hipper enclaves of every major city, reviving a style of drinking that is more considered, elegant and a step up from the local watering holes.

Similarly, the grand hotels, colonial outposts and institutions have realised that the essence of their history is distilled in their bars. These two forces, old and new, are merging to create a drinking scene that is as dynamic and as spirited as times past.

NORTH AMERICA

NEW YORK POURING RIBBONS

225 Avenue B, Second Floor, New York; pouringribbons.com.

A bar built for bartenders, Pouring Ribbons is less concerned with transporting revellers to another world/era than it is the serious celebration of the skill and artistry of cocktail making and tending bar. It might be a little earnest, but these are professionals at the height of their game.

The Drink: Gentlemen's Agreement (Beefeater gin, lime, Licor 43, cinnamon bitters and five-spice salt rim).

MAISON PREMIERE

298 Bedford Avenue, Brooklyn; maisonpremiere.com. In Brooklyn, the land of exposed bricks and Edison bulbs, this warmly lit, pale-green-hued French New Orleans-style bar is an outlier. Oysters and absinthe are served in lieu of the usual beer and pickles.

The Drink: Delaware Phoenix 'Meadow of Love' absinthe.

LOS ANGELES LA DESCARGA

1159 North Western Avenue, Los Angeles; ladescargala.com.

Parting the coats of the 'cloak room' of the hidden La Descarga reveals a spiral staircase winding into a wild Cuban-style room where burlesque is performed; equal parts Old Havana and Hollywood with cocktails to match.

The Drink: Cuban rum.

LEFT: Pouring Ribbons. BELOW: at Maison Premiere, if straight absinthe isn't your thing, The Evergreen (left) mixes muscadet, Pacificque absinthe, rosemary syrup and lime juice, while the Julep (right) is also a specialty of the house. OPPOSITE PAGE: Riviera Bar, São Paulo.



PHOTOGRAPHER LISA MENDELSON (MAISON PREMIERE)

SAN FRANCISCO TOSCA CAFE

242 Columbus Avenue, San Francisco; toscacafesf.com.

Last year the legendary North Beach institution was about to close before New York restaurateurs Ken Friedman and April Bloomfield bought it and breathed new life into the space. The results are a triumph, charming even the most parochial of San Franciscans and retaining not only the unique spirit of Tosca but also the presence of its inimitable former owner, the lioness Jeannette Etheredge.

The Drink: House Cappuccino 1919 (Marie Duffau Bas Armagnac, Buffalo Trace bourbon, dandelion chocolate ganache and organic milk).

MIAMI BEACH THE BROKEN SHAKER

2727 Indian Creek Drive, Miami Beach; thefreehand.com/venues/the-broken-shaker.

The Broken Shaker is the antithesis of the typical Miami Beach bar — a place that is dominated by trashy mega bars serving over-priced generic drinks to out-of-towners. Housed in the lush courtyard of hip hostel the Freehand, The Broken Shaker began as a cheeky pop-up and has unexpectedly grown into one of the best standalone bars in the country. It was the house-made sub-tropical tinged syrups, bitters, infusions and elixirs that first caused a stir in the industry, but it is the daily punch served in a silver bowl — often with orchids floating in it — that captures the imagination.

The Drink: The punch (selection of spirits, fruits, juices and botanicals).

PALATE

NEW ORLEANS CAROUSEL BAR & LOUNGE

14 Royal Street, New Orleans;
hotelmonteleone.com.

A town as eccentric and magical as New Orleans deserves a bar that is as fanciful as the Carousel. Housed in the lobby of the Hotel Monteleone, a haunt of Tennessee Williams, is an entire 1940s revolving carousel with 24 seats for drinkers. Needless to say, it is the only carousel in the world that you have to be aged 21-plus to ride.

The Drink: Sazerac (Sazerac rye whiskey, Herbsaint, Peychaud's bitters and sugar syrup).

MEXICO CITY SAN ANGEL INN

Calle Diego Rivera 50, Mexico City;
sanangelinn.com.

The old hacienda-style courtyard of the San Angel Inn must be one of the most exotic places to have a drink in the Americas. Their renowned margaritas and martinis come the old-fashioned way, with a silver ice bucket on the side holding the shaker. Enjoy your drink among the 17th-century walls, stone fountains and established gardens of this colonial landmark.

The Drink: Mezcal margarita (mezcal, triple sec and fresh lime juice).

SOUTH AMERICA

SAO PAULO RIVIERA BAR

Avenida Paulista, 2584, São Paulo;
rivierabar.com.br.

When the king of Brazilian gastronomy and the prince of São Paulo's nightlife decided together to resurrect a storied venue in São Paulo, all the elements were there for the revival of a great establishment. Riviera Bar, a recently derelict Modernist bar on a prominent corner in a gritty zone of the city, is a collaboration between chef Alex Atala and nightclub promoter Facundo Guerra, Brazil's coolest and cleverest operators. It is yet another great addition to a wild city with one of the best nightlife scenes in the world right now.

The Drink: A real caipirinha (Cachaça, sugar and lime).

EUROPE

LONDON

THE FUMOIR AT CLARIDGE'S

49 Brook Street, London W1K 4HR; claridges.co.uk.

While high tea in this Mayfair monolith can be both a little stale and a little ostentatious, there is nothing passé or gauche about the hidden bar in the *fumoir* room. Specialising as much in discretion as it does drinks, the Deco-decorated Fumoir is intimate and naturally attracts the chicest West London crowd.

The Drink: Gin and tonic.

NIGHTJAR

129 City Road, London EC1V 1JB; barnightjar.com.

Creative bartenders, great service and a cool '20s jazz vibe are the ingredients that make the city's best bar. The cocktail list changes twice yearly and for a serious splurge Nightjar also presides over an immense cabinet of vintage spirits for sale.

The Drink: Rosehip Julab (Zubrówka vodka, rosehip infusion, Kewra water, green tea kombucha, botanical syrup and rosé Champagne).

PARIS SHERRY BUTT

20 Rue Beautreillis, 75004 Paris;
sherrybuttparis.com.

Between tourist-overrun Marais and the hipster Bastille is this hidden Parisian gem. It isn't as grand or atmospheric as other traditional drinking spots, but you won't find a more expertly crafted drink elsewhere in Paris.

The Drink: Frangipane (rum, cognac, Champagne, barley syrup, lime and bitter chocolate).



ABOVE: The Everleigh. LEFT: Loos Bar. OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Shady Pines Saloon; while the drink of choice at Nightjar is the Rosehip Julab, their Shrubbler cocktail is also a standout, made from Excellia Reposado Tequila, Akashi Tai sake, seasonal fruit shrub and mulberry vinegar; Nightjar; The Broken Shaker; The Fumoir at Claridge's Black Pearl (vodka, Chambord, crème de cassis, blackberries, blueberries, lime and grapefruit juice) is as enticing as the superb gin and tonics.

credibly drink it — let alone make one — the baristas of this unpretentious Milan institution were crafting them by the dozen. The newly stylish Negroni Sbagliato originated from here and it is the fuel of Milan's fashion and design industry, who call this unpretentious yet glamorous bar their local.

The Drink: Negroni Sbagliato (vermouth rosso, Campari, prosecco and orange slice).

VIENNA

LOOS BAR

Kärntner Durchgang 10, 1010 Vienna; loosbar.at.

Modernist Adolf Loos's American Bar in Vienna is an architectural gem that has stood the test of time. So associated with the architect, the bar is simply known in Vienna and around the world as Loos Bar. Much emulated, rarely bettered.

The Drink: Vodka tonic.

MUNICH SCHUMANN'S

Odeonsplatz 6-7, 80539, Munich;
charles-schumanns.de.

The elegantly masculine Schumann's has been serving Munich's elite for 30 years and is built in the image of its owner and chief bartender, the now legendary Charles Schumann. While it is often impossible to get a table and incredibly expensive, it is worth the wrangling to experience the work of one of the most disciplined and respected figures in the game.

The Drink: Gin Gimlet (gin, lime and soda water).

AFRICA

MARRAKECH

LE CHURCHILL AT LA MAMOUNIA

Avenue Bab Jdid, Marrakech;
www.mamounia.com/en/intro.htm.

The plush Jacques Garcia makeover of Morocco's iconic hotel restored lustre not only to the grand dame but also its chic colonial lobby bar named after the British prime minister renowned for his statesmanship and prodigious drinking. The drinks are solid, but it is the surrounds that are splendid.

The Drink: Martini (gin and dry vermouth).

ASIA

TOKYO

BAR HIGH FIVE

26 Polestar Building 4F, 7-2-14 Ginza,
Chuo-ku, Tokyo; www.barhighfive.com.

Bartender Hidetsugu Ueno follows in a Japanese chef tradition of no menu and relying on instinct to predict what his customer might want in that moment. He's rarely wrong and a precisely made exquisite cocktail tailored to you arrives efficiently.

The Drink: Bartender's choice.

SINGAPORE

28 HONG KONG STREET

28 Hong Kong Street, Singapore; 28hks.com.

From the exterior 28 Hong Kong Street looks like any other '60s shop façade on a non-descript Singapore strip. However, through the curtains reveals South-East Asia's most serious drinking establishment. The list is highly influenced by the current American scene, featuring revivals of classics intermingling with more modern innovations such as barrel-aged cocktails.

The Drink: Whore's Bath (manuka honey vodka, umeshu plum wine, fresh lemon and pear liqueur).

AUSTRALIA

SYDNEY

SHADY PINES SALOON

Shop 4, 256 Crown Street, Darlinghurst, Sydney;
shadypinessaloon.com.

Admire more than the charming silliness of Shady Pines — in many ways this Disneyfied honky tonk transplant was the catalyst for a massive change in the Sydney bar scene; inspiring a lift in drink standards yet a relaxation in dress codes. It would be foolish to underestimate the influence of this fun little spot or the rascals that run it.

The Drink: Coopers Lager (from the tin).

MELBOURNE

THE EVERLEIGH

150-156 Gertrude Street, Fitzroy, Melbourne;
theeverleigh.com.

Hands down the best drinks in Melbourne are to be found at this speakeasy. With all the accoutrements and stylings (dim lighting, leather banquettes, nostalgic wardrobe, groomed beards) of the Prohibition-era trend, this bar might look like many of its international peers in London and New York but it is in the quality of the drink where they are really shaking it up.

The Drink: Mary Pickford (light rum, pineapple juice, maraschino liqueur, grenadine syrup and a cherry). **VE+**