

Dan Wallach's Favorite Cocktails
Martel College Cocktail Class
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Cocktails have a long and wonderful history. As long as our society has had alcohol, we've mixed it with things, perhaps to cover up bad tastes or perhaps to create sublime tasty goodness. Tonight, we're going to make three different cocktails that will cover many of the core techniques that you need to make just about anything. We're going to be precise about our measurements, at least for the first two cocktails, because this helps you get the flavor balance right (and reproducible) and it also helps you control your guests' alcohol consumption.

The Sazerac

Originating somewhere in the 1800's in New Orleans, a proper Sazerac uses rye whiskey (the spicier cousin of the more common bourbon whiskey). There's naturally some controversy over precisely how it should be done. The recipe here trades some authenticity for practicality, but I promise, it tastes perfect.

Ingredients:

2 oz rye whiskey (typically 40-50% ABV)
½ oz simple syrup (purists would use a sugar cube, but it's a pain to get it to dissolve)
2 dashes Angostura bitters
2 dashes Peychaud bitters
rocks glass, chilled, and rinsed with just a drop of absinthe
lemon peel (garnish)

In your mixing glass, combine the rye, simple syrup, and bitters with some ice cubes. Stir (to cool down the ingredients and add some water from melted ice). Meanwhile, put a small amount of absinthe in the chilled rocks glass and rotate the glass to coat with absinthe. Pour the whiskey mixture into the final rocks glass. Garnish with the lemon peel (but twist it so you get some lemon oil in the drink as well).

High tech alternative: I keep some absinthe in a hand-pumped spray bottle. This lets me put a nice even dose of absinthe on the surface of the drink and the sides of the glass, all at once.

References:

<http://www.gumbopages.com/food/beverages/sazerac.html>
<http://www.cocktailatlas.com/L2Hist/Sazerac/Sazerac.htm>
<http://southernfood.org/okra/?p=506>

Related drinks:

- Manhattan (can be made with either rye or bourbon whiskey, sweet vermouth, cherry garnish)
- Old Fashioned (typically bourbon whiskey, more simple syrup/sugar, orange garnish)

Get Inventive with Infusions

Did you know alcohol is a good solvent? Whiskeys are brown because alcohol dissolves some of the wood barrels that they're aged in. Gins get their flavor from juniper berries and other such things. (Incidentally, don't buy spirits in plastic bottles.) Normally, I stay away from vodka in mixed drinks; it implies a lack of creativity on the bar menu, since vodka – or at least good vodka – is nothing more than ethanol and water. This neutral lack of flavor, however, makes vodka the place to start for infusions. You might put in all manner of fruit (plums are a classic), greenery (kaffir lime leaves or any sort of herbs), or whatever suits your fancy (horseradish, ginger, jalapeños, etc.). Load it all in a clean glass jar with a lid, shake once a day, and keep tasting it. When you like what you've got, pour the liquid back into the bottle and pitch the solids (which may or may not be edible). Then you can invent your own cocktails with your new base spirit!

The Hemingway Daiquiri (a.k.a., a *papa doble* if you double the alcohol content)

This one is a bit newer, in that it's from the 1920's rather than the early 1800's. Note that this daiquiri has very little in common with the sort of thing you get at most cheap bars. There's no crushed ice, no blender, no "sour mix" (ewww!). This is a sophisticated, lovely drink. Because we're using fresh citrus fruit juice, this drink is technically a "sour", even though we're sweetening it up a bit with the simple syrup.

Ingredients:

1½ oz. white rum (Bacardi is fine; don't use aged, spiced, or "overproof" rum)
¼ oz Maraschino liqueur (made from cherry pits and other parts)
½ oz fresh grapefruit juice (squeezed)
¾ oz lime juice (squeezed)
¾ oz simple syrup

Like any drink involving fresh juice, this one should be shaken, not stirred. We'll discuss shaking technique in class. If you need to review, YouTube is your friend. Just search for "Boston shaker" and you'll see tons of videos showing the technique. Practice with just ice and water until you're comfortable doing it.

In your Boston shaker (the metal part), combine all the ingredients with ice. Put the glass on top and thump to seal it up. Shake, shake, shake. (Advanced: keep the glass on your side and the metal facing your guests when you shake. If you didn't get a good seal, at least you're not getting your guests wet.) Open the shaker, put the strainer in, and pour into a cocktail glass. Optionally pour through a wire-mesh strainer so you don't get small ice bits in the glass. Optionally garnish with a lime wedge.

Whatever you do, stay far far away from Rose's Lime Juice. That stuff is nasty.

Related drinks:

- Daiquiri (if you don't have grapefruit or Maraschino liqueur, you can simplify to 1 oz simple syrup and ¾ oz lime juice)
- Gin Rickey (pretty much the above Daiquiri, but with gin instead of rum, plus some fizzy water)

References:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maraschino>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DifX3jbmIXw> (Imbibe Magazine on shaking technique)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r01lvxR3EQo> (Imbibe Magazine on the Hemingway Daiquiri)

[http://www.liquoranddrink.com/Drinks/344-Hemingway-Daiquiri-\(Original\)/](http://www.liquoranddrink.com/Drinks/344-Hemingway-Daiquiri-(Original)/)

<http://liquor.com/articles/behind-the-drink-the-hemingway-daiquiri/>

Glassware

Do you really need rocks/old-fashioned glasses, Collins/highball glasses, Martini "V" glasses, Margarita "coupe" glasses, white and red wine glasses, beer glasses, brandy snifters, port glasses, champagne flutes, etc.? No, not really. You generally want glassware that can do lots of different things.

Rocks/old-fashioned glasses are general-purpose useful glasses, just as good for soda, milk, or orange juice, as any sort of cocktail. You can get perfectly good ones for \$2-5, or you can get fancy hand-blown ones for \$40+ each. The cheap ones are just fine.

Wine glasses are remarkably versatile. A white wine glass doubles as a fine way to serve anything that goes in a v-glass or coupe-glass. The bowl also keeps the smell in. A bigger red wine glass might hold 22 oz or more, giving you room for frozen drinks or whatever else, and the stem means you don't need coasters.

Beer glasses are built to put up with hell, and you can use them in your Boston shaker.

Champagne flutes are a one-hit-wonder, but by having less surface area, you keep the bubbles longer.

Aperol Spritz

This is a very common cocktail today in Venice and other parts of Northern Italy. It's simple and easy to make and very refreshing as a drink for a hot summer day. This one you can pretty much fake up without measuring what you're doing since there's no hard liquor in it. This drink is neither shaken nor stirred. Instead, it's *built* by pouring layer upon layer into a rocks glass with ice cubes.

Ingredients:

Prosecco (Italian sparkling wine, but with a very different flavor from Champagne)

Aperol (an "apéritif" that's only 11% ABV, roughly the same as wine)

Fizzy water (club soda, Pellegrino, etc.)

Orange wheel floating on top

Fill the glass with ice. Then pour in the prosecco. This will mostly fill the glass, then the fizz will die down. Add enough aperol to change the color from yellow to red. Then a splash of fizzy water on top. Optionally give it a quick stir with the back of your barspoon, but don't overdo it or you'll knock out all the bubbles. Garnish with an orange slice.

Related: spritzes can be made with a variety of different Italian apéritifs. Classics for this drink include Campari (20+% ABV, more bitter than Aperol) or Cynar (16.5% ABV, much, much more bitter). With those, you might garnish with a lemon slice rather than orange. Another classic cocktail in the same general vein is the *negroni*, made with gin, vermouth, and one of these apéritifs. See also the *americano*, made with Campari, sweet vermouth, and fizzy water.

References:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aperol>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cynar> (made with artichoke plus a variety of secret ingredients)

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Campari>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prosecco>

Crazy New Drinks

The modern world of "mixologists" have picked up where the great bartenders of the 1950's left off and have made some really incredible drinks. One of my favorites is the *Trinidad Sour*, which is something of a backwards Sazerac. Rather than rye whiskey as the base spirit with a small amount of bitters, here we instead use Angostura Bitters as the base spirit (with its crazy cinnamon-like flavors) and rye whiskey as a flavoring on top. Heresy! And then instead of simple syrup or sugar, it uses *orgeat* (almond syrup), and it's got lemon juice as well. It's crazy good and there's a whole world more where that came from.

Where do you learn about all these cool new drinks? Blogs! Probably the best of the bunch is *Cocktail Virgin Slut*. My favorite blogs, plus some books, are below. Now, you may see something that seems great but calls for some obscure ingredient that you don't have handy. Should you drop \$60 on that bottle of Chartreuse? First, go to a good bar like *Anvil Bar and Refuge*, and go on a week night when the bartenders aren't going nuts working as fast as possible. Anvil will be happy to make absolutely anything you want, even off-menu (very much not true for most other bars). They'll also make recommendations.

<http://cocktailvirgin.blogspot.com/>

<http://cocktailculture.wordpress.com/>

<http://cocktailenthusiast.com/>

<http://imbibemagazine.blogspot.com/>

<http://ajiggerofblog.com/>

<http://spiritsandcocktails.wordpress.com/>

<http://www.amazon.com/Craft-Cocktail-Everything-Bartender-Recipes/dp/0609608754/>

<http://www.amazon.com/PDT-Cocktail-Book-Bartenders-Celebrated/dp/1402779232/>

<http://www.npr.org/2010/12/30/132444994/a-vintage-cocktail-that-packs-a-punch>