



... where the focus is on the beverage alcohol retailer!



The Bottom Line

Behind The Bar | “The Bottom Line” for Off-Premise Retailers | Economic Impact
Spirits On The Rise: What Sells! | Taxes

Spirits On The Rise: What Sells!

Cocktail Trends Show No Signs of Slowing Down

The cocktail culture continues to grow in America and beverage designers are taking cocktails to a whole new level. Fancy concoctions are being created in bars, nightclubs and restaurants across the country while classic cocktails are being updated with a new twist.

Super-Premium Spirits are Top Sellers

Sophistication and luxury are key elements driving this resurgence. A wide selection of high-end spirits served in unique barware is just one of the things consumers have come to expect when dining out or enjoying a cocktail at their favorite restaurant. According to the Distilled Spirits Council, super-premium spirits grew by 23% in revenue to \$566 million in 2005.



Vegetable, Fruit, Herb and Flower Gardens Fair Game

Exotic garnishes such as kumquats, starfruit, heirloom cherry tomatoes and flowers (orchids and pansies have been spotted afloat New York drinks while verbena leaves are donning cocktails in the nation’s capitol) are what bartenders are using to top off these skillfully designed premium cocktails. Today’s consumers tend to be more visual and bartenders have responded with drinks that are just as impressive to look at as they are to consume.

“We treat our cocktails like dishes – they have to be both beautiful and balanced,” said Duggan McDonnell of Frisson Restaurant in San Francisco who was recently named San Francisco’s Rising Star Bar Chef by StarChefs.com, a restaurant industry website.

Fresh is Best

Fresh herbs, organic fruit, house made syrups, homemade bitters and obscure oils like litsea cubeba are just a few of the top-notch ingredients being used to design creative, new cocktails. Infusing spirits in-house has also become a popular trend in bars and nightclubs. Consumers can expect to find anything from jalepeño infused vodka to cilantro infused rums when they go out.

Muddling Makes a Comeback

Muddling – a technique once commonly used by bartenders decades ago – is back in vogue. Master mixologists (or Bar Chefs), both terms preferred over “bartenders,” are embracing the practice again. Patrons have responded positively recognizing this level of detail gives additional cache to the finished product. A cocktail connoisseur will definitely reject a mojito served with artificial mint-flavored additives instead of freshly muddled mint leaves.

Spirits Flights Take Off

In addition to the luxury cocktails, spirits flights are also proving to be successful. A flight of spirits is created for groups of diners, allowing them to compare a selection of small samples of a specific spirits category (i.e., Bourbons, tequilas, whiskies, etc). Rosa



Mexicano (Washington, D.C. and New York) allows customers to try flights of sipping tequilas from three different categories – blanco, reposado and añejo.

Alternatively, cocktail flights are also being served. This is generally a set of themed-based cocktails. For instance, Nacional 27 in Chicago offers mojito flights consisting of the Mojito Classic, Pomegranate-Ginger Mojito and a Pineapple Mojito. Sugarcane Lounge in New York City allows large groups to sample small quantities of a variety of cocktails presented in a cast-iron “Cocktail Tree.” The tree offers 12 cocktail samples for \$50.



“With our extensive cocktail list our diners often have trouble choosing a drink so our flights menu allows them to sample small quantities of a variety,” said Paul Tanguay, who created the flights menu at Sugarcane Lounge at SushiSamba.

As spirits sales continue to soar, successful on-premise establishments are capitalizing on these new trends and creating their own to bring consumers a wonderful cocktail experience.

The Distilled Spirits Council is a national trade association representing the leading brands of distilled spirits. Council member products include the full spectrum of quality distilled spirits such as Bourbon, Scotch and other whiskeys, vodka, gin, tequila, rum, brandy, cordials and liqueurs. Distillers take special pride in their products as well as in their commitment to encourage responsible beverage alcohol consumption by adults who choose to drink distilled spirits. DISCUS and its members want to remind you if you choose to drink, be sure to consume sensibly and responsibly. An important part of responsible drinking is understanding that a standard drink of regular beer (12 ounces), distilled spirits (1.5 ounces of 80-proof spirits) and wine (five ounces) each contains the same amount of alcohol.

[Bev Retail Spotlight Home](#) | [Legislative & Regulatory](#) | [Retail Responsibility](#) | [The Bottom Line](#) | [Alcohol & Health](#) | [Top Picks & Taste Trends](#) | [Events Contact Us](#) | [Sitemap](#)



Site hosted by the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States. A national trade association representing producers and marketers of America’s favorite brands of distilled spirits.

© 2007 Distilled Spirits Council of The United States