

**MIXOLOGY**

# Summertime, and the Entertaining is Easy

**SIP SIMPLY  
WITH THESE  
READY-  
TO-DRINK  
COCKTAILS**

By Bill Burke

The days are growing longer and warmer, and deck season is upon us. Summer — and guests — are coming.

Think stress-free and simple then, by turning to ready-to-drink cocktails. These convenient options allow everyone to enjoy refreshments — even the host.

Don't really feel like fully stocking a bar with a selection of spirits, bitters and sodas and then pulling an all-nighter to pass a crash course in mixology? Not a problem. Thanks to the cocktail boom, there's a world of enthusiasts who appreciate an expertly crafted cocktail, and a variety of producers who have created top-notch, ready-to-drink cocktails designed to satisfy knowledgeable palates.

From colodas to mudslides to an array of margaritas, ready-to-drink cocktails can make entertaining a breeze. And with a little imagination — and very little sweat — they can provide guests with much more than a canned option.

The beauty of these ready-to-drink cocktails is that the simplicity doesn't end when the sipping does. Use what you need and then store what's left in the refrigerator. The next time there's a call for an after-dinner drink, a picnic in need of some refreshment or an unexpected guest dropping by, it'll be ready to pour. And the convenience is unbeatable: choose from 1.75 liter sizes or pre-mixed cocktails in single-serve cans.

Here are a few suggestions designed to help your get-together come together with ease and expertise.

### Bahama Mama

**WHAT IS IT?** The Bahama Mama is a classic that's undergone a bit of an evolution over the years, blending the flavors of pineapple juice, coconut and rum. Older versions of this cocktail even included a touch of coffee.

**READY TO DRINK:** The *Bacardi Bahama Mama* is a refreshing taste of the tropics perfect for summer sipping, in a pre-mixed cocktail, made with real exotic fruit juices and Bacardi rum. Just add ice or blend and serve.

**UPGRADE IT:** Fill a hurricane glass (a tall, curved glass shaped like a hurricane lamp or vase) with ice, and garnish with an orange slice or pineapple wedge and a cherry.



Always drink in moderation.

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## GARNISH-AND-GO

Sometimes, the only thing that separates a good cocktail from a great one is what's on it. The right garnish can put the finishing touch on a carefully crafted cocktail made from scratch, or elevate a Ready-To-Drink to star status. From citrus to sweets, there are a variety of options available to creative would-be mixologists who want to top it all off with style.

**FRESH HERBS:** Herbs like mint (perfect with a mojito), cilantro (goes well with tequila) and rosemary (sweet or citrus-based drinks) can lend a stylish look as well as an unusual variety of aromatics and flavors to the right cocktail. *Pro tip:* Gently muddle the herbs before adding them to your cocktail, which will release the flavors and aromas.

**FRESH FRUIT:** A lemon twist works perfectly with the right martini, a slice of orange adds character to the classic screwdriver and maraschino cherries are a perfect accompaniment to fruity drinks or mocktails. Several types of fruit can be skewered together on a visually arresting kabob, and berries or slices of fruit can be frozen in ice cubes to capture a chilled, memorable appearance. If you're using an apple slice in a Moscow mule, consider carving the fruit with a cookie cutter to give it a unique look.

**COCKTAIL RIMMERS:** Salt, sugar, candy and even crushed cookies can add a flavorful element to any drink. Not just an eye-catching flourish, a rimmed cocktail glass can balance the flavors in a complex concoction. *Here's how:* Dip the rim of the glass into a shallow bowl of water, lime juice or lemon juice, and then dip the rim of the glass into your ingredient of choice. The options are limitless, but try using coarse sea or kosher salt, plain white or brown sugar, Pop Rocks, graham crackers, ground peppermint sticks or coconut.

**SWEETS:** Cocktails like the frozen mudslide, caramel apple martini or even a decadent chocolate martini are perfect evening enders that can be taken to the next level with a touch of creativity. Garnish sweet sippers with toppings like whipped cream, cocoa powder, grated nutmeg and even coffee beans.

## Long Island Iced Tea

**WHAT IS IT?** The Long Island Iced Tea — claimed to have been invented as part of a contest designed to create a new cocktail using triple sec in the early 1970s — is typically made with vodka, rum, tequila, gin and triple sec with a splash of cola.

**READY TO DRINK:** *Barton Long Island Iced Tea* is a delicious mix of rum, gin, vodka, tequila and triple sec. This ready-to-drink version is bottled at 75 proof.

**UPGRADE IT:** Pour this cocktail into a highball glass filled with ice, garnish it with a lemon wedge and serve with a straw.



## Cranberry Cosmo

**WHAT IS IT?** While the origin of the cosmopolitan is in dispute — a number of mixologists claim it as their own — it's a classic that saw dramatic resurgence in the 1990s as a favorite of Sarah Jessica Parker's Carrie Bradshaw in the "Sex and the City" series. Typically, the cosmo is crafted with vodka, triple sec, cranberry juice and freshly squeezed lime juice.

**READY TO DRINK:** *Skinnygirl White Cranberry Cosmo* features hints of orange essence, a subtle lime taste, berry fruit notes and cranberry, which are combined into a natural, agave-sweetened sipper. And because Skinnygirl uses white cranberries, there are no worries about spills and stains.

**UPGRADE IT:** Skewer a few cranberries onto a cocktail pick for an eye-catching garnish, pour it into a martini glass and serve.



## Margarita

**WHAT IS IT?** A popular (see: Jimmy Buffet's 1977 ode, "Margaritaville") and affable classic, this combination of tequila, orange liqueur and lime juice can be served shaken with ice, blended with ice or entirely without ice. The classic margarita offers lime and fruit flavors.

**READY TO DRINK:** When it comes to ready-to-drink margaritas, there's no shortage of choices. The *Fabrizia Italian Margarita* is crafted from Fabrizia's Limoncello, for a completely unique take on the classic. Small-batch, hand-made and all-natural, it's available in 1.75 liter, 750ml or single-serve cans. *1800 Ultimate Margarita* is made with real tequila and lime extract, for those seeking the classic, or in a variety of flavors, including pineapple, rasp-

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berry, watermelon, jalapeno-lime and peach. *Jose Cuervo Sparkling Lime* is available in single-serve cans, as is *Sauza Agua Fuerte*, made with sparkling water and comes in the classic lime, or in grapefruit or mango flavors.

**UPGRADE IT:** Starting with a margarita glass, rub the rim of the glass with lime juice and twist it into salt, garnish with a lime slice and serve, or blend with ice for a slushy treat.

### Zombie

**WHAT IS IT?** Invented at Don the Beachcomber restaurant in Hollywood in the 1930s and then popularized on the east coast at the 1939 World's Fair, the zombie is a fruity cocktail made from rum and brandy.

**READY TO DRINK:** The *Bacardi Zombie* is an exotic cocktail made with classic Bacardi rum. Just open and pour over ice to experience the sweet rum, pineapple, lime, orange and apricot flavors bottled at 25 proof.



**UPGRADE IT:** Embrace tiki culture and pour this azure concoction over crushed ice into a zombie glass, which is sometimes frosted on the bottom and clear at the top. Larger than many bar glasses, the zombie glass is straight and chimney-like, holding 13-14 ounces.

### Mudslide

**WHAT IS IT?** Created in the Cayman Islands in the 1950s, the mudslide is a creamy, sweet blend of vodka or rum, coffee liqueur and Irish cream. It's as much a dessert as it is a drink.

**READY TO DRINK:** *Chi Chi's Mexican Mudslide* has created a mudslide with a Mexican twist, crafted with rum, coffee liqueur imported from Mexico and real cream. The *Ice Box Mudslide* is made with real cream and neutral spirits and is flavored with coffee brandy and Irish liqueur.

The original *Kahlua Mudslide* is available in 1.75 liter, as well as convenient grab-and-go individual serving four-packs.

**UPGRADE IT:** Indulge your guests with this chilled, velvety cocktail by first swirling chocolate syrup into the inside of a pre-chilled stemmed glass. Add the mudslide ready-to-drink cocktail mix to the glass, then garnish with whipped cream and chocolate shavings. Serve up with a straw. ☹



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