

Mixing Cocktails Turns Into Trendy, Personalized Artwork

By [Simone Peek](#)

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Fjalar Goud roasting a cinnamon stick to make his signature Dutch punch. **Simone Peek**

In Hollywood, every star has his own characteristic drink. For Quentin Tarantino, it's tequila-based mixes, while Brad Pitt drinks his high-class vodka straight, with an olive. Dave Stewart orders his dry martini in a special way, with three olives and specific vermouth.

This trend has found its way to the larger public: Specialized cocktails can be mixed to fit your personal taste and are served by highly trained bartenders.

That this is, in fact, a trend set in motion by large liquor brands is less conspicuous. But whatever the cause, cocktail bartending has become a world of its own. Bartenders play a central role in the new drinking culture, which makes sense if you consider that they are the last link in getting the spirits from the bottle to the customer.

Last week, Moscow was paid a visit by Fjalar Goud, named the "best bartender of the

Netherlands" and European winner of the Diageo Reserve World Class competition, who then went on to get fourth place at the bartending world championship in Rio de Janeiro.

In Moscow, Goud taught a masterclass to aspiring bartenders and introduced the latest cocktail trends. One of them is called "Hollywood, Bollywood, Hong Kong." In this trend, cocktails are mixed to match the glamour of the different film industries, like cocktails that salute the fellows of the Rat Pack or characters from the television show "Mad Men."

This whole line of drinks is primarily about enjoyment. The bartender is expected to present the drink like a show, with Hollywood stories and anecdotes, thus making the customer feel like a star.

Another craze is called "Retro-Chic." This is a derivative of the prohibition styled cocktails, with their jazzy flair, combined with the more uplifting spirits of the '50s and '60s.

The cocktail trends are mostly dictated by the major liquor brands, like Diageo. But the bartender also has to agree to the cocktail concoction as well as to the brand.

"If there is any pressure, it won't happen. Bartenders are very central in the evolution of trends, which is also why there is so much invested in them," Goud said. "Bartenders are a group of people that communicate a lot over the Internet. So if something is not right with one brand, it will be discarded by the bartender community in no time."

The new style of cocktail bartending is similar to developments in cooking. In television programs, like "MasterChef," the chefs are also central and their skills are of the highest importance.

Now that making cocktails is becoming a more culinary experience, these drinks can even claim their place at the table as part of a full-fledged meal. While before, food would often be combined with special wine, the fashion-forward now add cocktails to certain meals. Cocktails are thought to be more versatile than wine because their taste can be adapted to have any flavor possible.

In the so-called "Barchef" fashion, bartenders are encouraged to think about what food could be served with their cocktail.

"Imagine a Caprese salad: mozzarella, tomato and basil. If you leave the basil out of the dish and consequently make a basil-like gin infusion that you serve together with the salad, you create unity within the drink and the dish," Goud said.

When creating the perfect cocktail, like in cooking, every ingredient matters and has to be fresh.

"The weakest link decides whether your drink tastes good or not," Goud explained. "A good restaurant will prepare everything itself. A bad restaurant will serve you soup from a package." And that also goes for the offer in cocktails.

Moscow is an enthusiastic follower of the worldwide trend. That bartending is a serious profession in the city can be seen by the large amount of applications for bartending competitions. In Moscow, the Diageo Reserve World Class competition collects a maximum

number of participants, Goud said, while in the Netherlands they have to actively look to fill the slots.

If this article made you thirsty to try some cocktails yourself, you can visit one of these three top bars.

Delicatessen (20/2 Sadovaya-Karetnaya Ulitsa)

This bar, where Goud's masterclass took place, brews its own vermouth and makes excellent cocktails with top notch ingredients.

Belka (3/4 Bolotnaya Naberezhnaya)

At Belka, you can enjoy your cocktail in a cozy atmosphere. Located at Red October, the center of Moscow nightlife, you can use this bar as a starting point for your night out.

Time Out Bar (5 Bolshaya Sadovaya Ulitsa, 13th floor of Peking Hotel)

Here you can sit in a professionally designed interior while enjoying the beautiful view over Moscow from the terrace restaurant. Cocktails are mixed by the well-known bartender, Alexander Kan.

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