THE GARAGE GROUP · COURAGEOUS MINDS ONLY ·

Mini Trends Report

Savoring Summer 2023:
Hottest Alcohol Flavor Trends

2023 has brought a delightful array of alcohol flavor trends to savor this summer. From exotic botanicals to European influences and new twists on classic favorites, there are a lot of exciting choices on this summer's cocktail menu. Gin-based concoctions are on the rise, suggesting that the fast growing tequila-based trend may have already peaked. Other fading trends such as espresso, spicy cocktails and fruit infusions are also fading while new superstars such as hibiscus, salt and elderflower are on the rise. But towering over every buzz-worthy new flavor is a macro trend towards health-conscious sipping. This fast growing category is experiencing an evolution in vernacular as well as fun experimentation with functional infusions such as CBD and adaptogens. ***Join us in savoring these hottest trends and raise a glass to the unforgettable flavors of Summer 2023! Cheers!***

Classic Americana Remixed

American Malts, dark cane spirits and regional bourbons are having a moment. They embody the nostalgic grit of the American saloon, now updated with artisanal ingredients and small-batch varieties. Consumers continue to love an origin story and beverages that have a certain mood as well as flavor. These types of drinks feature notes of orange, molasses, nutmeg, caramel and tobacco and speak to consumers who are tired of the typical “umbrella drinks.” Classic mix-ups such as bourbon with cream soda and lemonade are also popping up.

Salt Over Spice

While spicy cocktails aren’t going anywhere, there’s another robust flavor enhancer gaining traction. Salt, historically known just for rimming margaritas, is now being featured as a key ingredient. Simply put, salt gives flavors more POP, which is especially powerful as cocktails become more elevated in terms of interesting ingredients. A natural flavor enhancer, adding salt to a cocktail can balance sweetness and bitterness, as well as add depth and texture in carbonated beverages. Extra fun comes in when brands experiment with flavored salts and peppercorns.

Mediterranean Aperitivos

Last year the Aperol Spritz, a classic Italian summer cocktail became Insta-famous, popular for its timeless class, branded caché and eye-catching orange color. This year, the Limoncello Spritz is gaining on its Italian cousin, showing up on more cocktail menus throughout the sweltering summer months. Pairing a classic liquor with effervescent Prosecco to make a sophisticated spritz will continue to dominate summer cocktail trends, and we should thus expect them to make their way into the RTD space. The French Hugo Spritz, which uses the same recipe formula with the elderflower liqueur, St. Germain is also gaining fast popularity among summer sippers. Google Trends reports that the beverage has had a 500 percent jump in search volume during recent summer months.

Floral Liqueurs

Floral liqueurs are making a strong comeback this summer, appealing to consumers looking for exotic and aromatic flavors. Among the top 5 floral liqueurs in the world, Rozulin stands out with its traditional rose variety Rosa centifolia from Dubrovnik. Parfait Amour, with its vibrant purple color and floral character, has become more common in recent years. St-Germain, the French elderflower liqueur used in the Hugo Spritz, boasts a balanced and refined taste with tropical fruit, pear, peach, and honeysuckle aromas. Rosolio, an ancient Italian liqueur, is infused with various local products, including rose petals. Crème de violette, a fragrant French liqueur made from violets, has been reintroduced, offering unique cocktail possibilities. Lillet Blanc is another, a floral and honey-forward aperitif that adds a unique twist to any cocktail.

Botanical Infusions

Botanical infusions - including floral, plant and herbal ingredients - also continue to gain popularity, aligning with the broader trend of lighter drinks in terms of flavor and alcohol by volume (ABV). These delicate flavor profiles offer consumers and bartenders the opportunity to create elegant and refreshing drinks, as well as functional benefit claims depending on the ingredient. Among the various botanical trends, hibiscus stands out for its distinctive tangy flavor, subtle acidity, and vibrant color. Hibiscus is prevalent in several drink categories, but has created a very strong presence in Mexican-inspired beers and craft cocktails. Other trending botanicals include lilac blossom, basil, rosemary, lavender, thyme and rose water.

Floral flavors not only excel individually but also pair remarkably well together. Producers have experimented with combinations like elderflower and jasmine or jasmine and rose to create enchanting taste experiences. These floral flavor pairings have found their way into various alcoholic beverages, enticing consumers with their unique and captivating profiles.

Zero-Proof

Non-alcoholic is one of the fastest growing segments across beverages in most major markets. Year on year, it continues to grow with double digit growth. While the contributing factors are fairly stable (consumer prioritization of health and wellness, increased exposure of the effects of alcohol usage and rising consciousness of sugar intake to name a few…) what continues to fluctuate is the angle and positioning of offerings. For example, we are seeing language such as “zero alcohol” and “zero-proof” being used more instead of “non-alcoholic,” which suggests a more negative, problem-based connotation. Think of Coke Zero vs. Diet Coke - both have a similar proposition but vastly different consumer insight angles.

Additionally, while the last few years have focused on replicating the flavor of traditional alcohol-based beers, RTD cocktails and spirits are now experimenting with the replication of the sensorial and cognitive experiences. For example, NA beverages that feature mood altering ingredients such as CBD, ashwagandha and adaptogens to produce a relaxed, mellow feeling similar to that of alcohol.

Major flavor trends mirror traditional RTD cocktails, as well as beautifully packaged simple spirits, such as gin, vodka, rum and tequila dupes to stock the NA home bar cart.

In summary, here's a quick HOT or NOT in honor of the blazing summer heat:

HOT

- *Gin*
- *Lemoncello & Hugo Spritz*
- *Salty*
- *Floral liqueurs*
- *Hibiscus Martinis*
- *"Zero-Proof"*

NOT

- *Tequila*
- *Aperol Spritz*
- *Spicy*
- *Fruity liquors*
- *Espresso Martinis*
- *"Non-Alcoholic"*

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Whether transporting to the Italian Riviera, experimenting with new botanical combinations or replacing alcohol all-together with visually appealing alternatives that are equal parts tasty and functional, these trends will continue to shape the alcohol landscape throughout the year.