

COFFEE-INFUSED

Patrón's "Winter in Russia" combines Patrón Silver, XO Café and heavy cream. At Kobrick Coffee in Manhattan, the Yama Cold Brew Drip Tower preps coffee for their "Three Hour Kyoto Negroni."



JAVA JOINS THE PARTY

A NEW WAVE OF COFFEE-INFUSED SPIRITS, BEERS AND WINES BREW INNOVATION

BY DAVID LINCOLN ROSS

Move over Tia Maria, make way Kahlúa. A new generation of coffee-infused spirits, liqueurs, beers, and even caffeinated wines are waking up mixologists and merchants to new flavor possibilities. And as we collectively groan at the thought of bartenders and baristas morphing into “bartistas,” let’s remember that people’s hankering for java is deep, broad and passionate.

Classic coffee-infused liqueurs noted above are increasingly attracting like-flavored company. Patrón XO Café, the innovative coffee-and-tequila liqueur launched in 2012, was actually ahead of the curve, securing prime shelf space and back-bar placements ahead of a crop of audaciously named upstarts such as:

- **Death Wish Coffee Vodka**, Albany Distilling Co., NY
- **BOMB**, coffee-infused ale from Prairie Artisan Ales, Tulsa, OK
- **Café Agave Mocha**, a 13.8% ABV coffee-flavored creamer by Café Agave, San Diego, CA
- **Firelit Coffee Spirits Liqueur**, Firelit Spirits, San Francisco, CA
- **Dark-Natural Coffee Liqueur**, Prairie Wolf Spirits, Guthrie, OK
- **Cabernet Coffee Espresso and Chardonnay Coffee Cappuccino**, from Friends Fun Wine, Aventura, FL
- **Bad Larry’s Cold Hard Coffee**, 6% ABV cold brew in 11.5oz cans, Minneapolis, MN



And on the flip side, there is Molinari Café’s wine-infused coffee roast, whose beans, pre-roasting, are immersed in red wine including some sourced from NapaValley (of course), not to mention the wide-open world of mixology.

In 2016, Kobrick Coffee Co., a Jersey City, NJ-based roaster founded in 1920, opened a café Manhattan’s Meatpacking District that serves a variety coffee-infused cocktails. It’s been thronged since day one, according to Samuel Ta, Head Barista, who says one of bar’s best-sellers is the “Loca Mocha,” a cocktail comprised of Ancho Chile liqueur, Jameson Irish whiskey, chocolate milk, cold-brewed Kobrick coffee and Hella



JAVA PARTY



Scott Kobrick, fourth-generation member of the Kobrick family, says, “We encouraged our baristas to be innovative in creating signature cocktails.” Pictured here: Bottled on Broadway starts with a cold brew, then adds aged rum, potato vodka, simple syrup and Hella aromatic bitters.

aromatic bitters. Another top pick is the “Marin Boulevardier,” made of Four Roses Bourbon, Campari, Contratto Rosso, Kyoto-dripped, single-origin Burundi Rugoza coffee.

Grounds ‘Know No Bounds’

Assessing the coffee-driven innovation percolating through spirits, beer and wine, Giorgio Milos, Master Barista, illy caffè North America, a leading Italian premium coffee purveyor, offers, “Mixologists, distillers and brewers are always looking for new ingredients and finally they realized that coffee is very versatile.”

Zach Prichard, owner of Prairie Artisan Ales, agrees, adding: “Coffee-beers have been around for at least a generation, but brewers have been using coffee in more ways recently, especially with lighter styles like IPA, sours and seasonals.”

Following a trip to New Orleans where he enjoyed chicory-flavored coffee, Dave Smith, Head Distiller, St. George Artisan Spirits, Alameda, CA, created NOLA Coffee Liqueur, a blend of French-roasted chicory, non-GMO corn-based spirits, organic cane sugar, Madagascar vanilla bean, and coffee from Jewel Box Coffee Roasters in Oakland. While St. George was established in 1982, NOLA launched in 2014, with SRP \$35.

Zach Brinley, Chief Bootlegger, Brinley Gold Shipwreck Rum, Atlantic Highlands, NJ, which markets its Shipwreck coffee-flavored rum from St. Kitts, says, “The craft revolution in spirits, wine and beer knows no bounds, and coffee is now entering this transformation.”

What is the best way to merchandise these assorted coffee-inspired brands? Brinley suggests going outside the mug, so to speak, by shelving Shipwreck Coffee Rum next to Kahlúa and Tia Maria, instead of in the rum section.” In other words, merchants might consider a dedicated “coffee corner” of a store.

Gary Fisch, Owner and CEO, Gary’s Wine and Marketplace, with four locations in New Jersey, says: “Zach Brinley’s suggestion makes sense. In fact, I’m going to start grouping all my coffee-infused spirits from Van Gogh Espresso Vodka to Patrón XO Café to Shipwreck Coffee Rum in my stores. It’s a great idea.” ■



CULTURE CLASH?

It’s cocktail culture meets coffee culture with a nod to craft beer at New York City’s Zuma, in the form of a cocktail on tap. Their Nitro Espresso Martini melds house-made cold brew coffee, green tea, vanilla liqueur, Grey Goose Vodka and the kitchen’s own caramelized popcorn syrup—delivered with a frothy fizz thanks to a charge of nitrogen, borrowed from craft brewers’ “nitro” trend.

